

THERESE

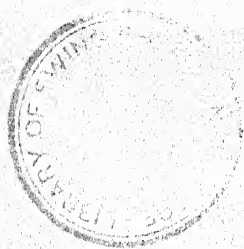
by

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When you come from the wharf, at the end of rue Guenegaud you find the passage of the Pont-Neuf. It is a sort of a narrow and a dark corridor which runs from rue Mazarine to rue de Seine. It is only about thirty paces long and at the most about two paces wide. The passage is paved with yellowish flagstones which have become worn out and loose, and acrid water seeps through their crevices. The windows that face this passage are black with dirt.

On a bright summer day, when the strong rays of the sun burn the streets, a whitish light falls on the dirty window panes which reflect it miserably into the passage. But on a dull winter day, when the mornings are foggy, the window panes reflect only darkness into the slippery passage, a darkness that is unclean and ignoble.

To the left, are some low and obscure shops which are over-burdened with goods. They give the appearance of caves. Among these shops are to be found old-book shops, toy shops, book-binding shops. The goods in these shops are covered with dust and seem to repose in darkness. The shop windows with their small glass panes reflect strange greenish light on these goods. Behind the exhibits in the shop windows these shops look like so many dismal holes in which fantastic forms move now and then.

To the right, all along the passage, there extends a wall against which the shopkeepers

have placed their narrow show-cases and almirahs. In these show-cases, on narrow shelves which are painted in a horrible brown colour are to be found objects which have hardly a name, which have perhaps been forgotten there for twenty years or more. In one of these show-cases, a merchant of counterfeit jewellery has for sale rings that cost only fifteen pices each. They are exhibited beautifully on a piece of blue velvet in a mahogany box.

The wall rises above the shop windows. It is black and heavily plastered and looks as if it were covered with leprosy and full of festering scars.

The passage of the Pont-Neuf is not a place for promenading. People go there only to avoid a long detour so that they can save a few minutes. It is used by men of affairs whose one care is to cross it quickly and straight. Among these may be noticed apprentices in their aprons, workers who are carrying back their work, and men and women with packets under their arms. Among them are also to be found a few old people who slowly drag themselves in the gloomy twilight that falls from the windows. And there are also bands of school children who go there, on their return from school, so that they make a noise while running with their wooden shoes on the cobble stones. All day long, there is a dry, resounding noise from the stones with irritating irregularity. Not a person speaks, not a person stops, everyone hurries to his or her work with his head down, walking rapidly, without casting even a single glance at the shops. If any one among the passers-by, by a miracle, stops before the

exhibits of a shop, the shop-keeper regards him with disquiet.

In the evening, three gas-jets placed in a square and thick lanterns light the passage. These gas-jets throw little specks of brownish light on the shop windows. They also cast around themselves circles of pale light which disappears the next instant. The passage takes a sinister appearance of a cut-throat. Long shadows fall on the flag-stones, and a humid air comes from the street. It can be said that the passage looks like an underground gallery with three funeral lamps.

The shop-keepers content themselves with the meagre light from the gas-jets for lighting their shop windows.



II

Madam Raquin was an old mercer of Vernon. For the last twenty-five years, she had lived in a small shop in that town. A few years after the death of her husband, she got wearied and sold her property. Her savings, together with the price that she realised from the sale of her shop, amounted to about forty thousand Francs which she invested judiciously. From these investments she received an annual income of about two thousand Francs. That amount was quite enough for her. For she lived the life of a recluse, ignoring the joys and worries of this world. She lead a quiet and a peaceful life.

She rented a small house for four hundred Francs, with a little garden which extended to the banks of the Seine. That was a secluded and a private house which gave the feeling of a cloister. A narrow path led to that house, situated in the middle of a wide plain. The windows opened on the river and also gave a view of the lands on the other side. The old lady who was past fifty, shut herself up in that solitude, and enjoyed with her son, Camille, and her niece, Therese, a quiet life.

Camille was already twenty years old. But his mother still treated him as a small child. She adored him for having successfully fought illness during his childhood. The child had attacks, one after the other, of all the imaginable maladies. Madam Raquin supported him in this fight for about fifteen years. By her patience, and her care, and the love that she bore him she finally succeeded.

Saved from death, Camille grew up. But he was always susceptible to the slightest attack of illness, as his body had been weakened during his childhood. His growth having been marred in childhood, he remained thin. His limbs were lean with a slow and fatigued movement. In spite of the feebleness, his mother loved him. She looked with great tenderness upon the pale and little figure of her son, and thought how she had almost snatched him from the jaws of death at least ten times.

During the rare periods of rest which illness left him, the child attended a commercial school at Vernon. He learned there writing and Arithmetic. He also learnt a little grammar. Later on, he learnt a little Accountancy also. But when people advised Madam Raquin to send him to College, she trembled. For she knew that away from her he would die; the books would kill him, she said, Camille thus remained ignorant. His ignorance was, therefore, another weakness in him.

When he was Eighteen, he was still unoccupied. He often felt irritated by the softness and cajollery with which his mother enveloped him. He decided, therefore, to enter the shop of a cloth merchant as a clerk. His pay was Sixty Francs per month. He was of a restless nature and inclined to be indolent. He found his idleness unbearable, and it was therefore a great diversion to be engaged in his work in the shop. There he was busy all the day long with Invoices and figurework. In the evening, when he returned from work he felt his "head" to be empty and enjoyed the pleasures of idleness at home. He had many a quarrel with his mother,

who desired to keep him always with her, covered in bed far from any chance of accident. The young man considered himself to be the master. He took to work in the same way in which other children take to play. This was not because of his love for duty, but simply as a necessity of nature. The tenderness and the devotion of his mother had made him an egoist. Outwardly, he loved all those who liked him. But in reality he loved none but himself, trying by all means possible to add to his happiness. The tender affections of Madam Raquin disgusted him. He tried to be busy in some occupation which would save him from the decoctions and potions that Madam Raquin forced on him. On return from the office, he ran to the Seine with his cousin, Therese.

Therese was already eighteen. Sixteen years ago, while Madam Raquin was still a mercer, one day her brother, Captain Degans brought her a little child in his arms. He had returned from Algeria.

"Here is a child to whom you are an aunt" he said with a smile. "Her mother is dead and I do not know what to do with her. I present her to you."

The mercer took the child, smiled at her, and kissed her rosy cheeks. Degans stayed at Vernon for a week. His sister never questioned him about the girl he had given her. But she knew vaguely that the child was born at Oran, and her mother was a very beautiful native woman. An hour before his departure, the Captain gave her a birth certificate of the child. He departed, and was never seen again. A few years later, he was killed in Africa.

Therese grew up, sleeping in the same bed as Camille, under the care of her aunt. She had good health and was generally neglected. She often shared the medicines that were given to her cousin and lived in the hot air of the room which was occupied by the sick. For hours together she lay before a fire, pensive, regarding the flames without closing the eyelids. That sort of life forced her to retire to herself. She was in the habit of speaking in a low voice, walking without noise, and remaining quiet and motionless with her eyes wide open, in a chair. But when she raised her arms, or advanced a step, her strong muscles gave evidence of a feline suppleness. She showed great energy and passion that lay dormant in her body. One day her cousin fell down, owing to weakness. She picked him up and carried him. This was a clear evidence of her vigour. The life that she was living had not weakened her body; only her face became pale, slightly yellowish, which made her rather ugly to look at. When she went to the window, she contemplated the houses opposite on which the sun was throwing its golden rays.

When Madam Raquin had sold her property and retired to this little house on the river, Therese was secretly thrilled with joy. Her aunt had often repeated to her "Do not make a noise. Keep quiet". This had driven her to hide her passions carefully. She had developed a complete control of herself, and an apparent calmness behind which lay hidden the terrible passion and fury which the girl possessed by nature. In her cousin's room she always felt as if she was near a sickly infant. She moved, therefore, very quietly, in silence. When she

saw the garden, the white river, the vast green banks extending up to the horizon in this new house, she was seized with a savage desire to run and cry. She felt her heart beating violently. But not a muscle in her face moved or gave any sign of her inward struggle. She contented herself with a little smile when her aunt asked her if she liked the new house.

Life for her now became a little easier. She kept, however, the suppleness of her gait, the calmness of her face, and her apparent indifference. She still remained a child who had been brought up in the bed of a sick patient. In her heart, she lived entirely a different existence which was on fire with excitement. When she was alone, on the grass on the bank of the river, she lay flat on her face, with her black eyes wide open, body poised as if ready to take a jump. She remained there in this position for hours, thinking nothing, basking in the sun, and happy at digging her fingers in the ground. She gave herself up to mad dreams; she looked at the river that flowed by, with defiance. She imagined that the river was going to attack her. She, therefore, got ready for defence. She thought out, with anger, a plan how to vanquish the river.

In the evenings, Therese, pleased and silent, sewed by the side of her aunt. Her face appeared to be sleepy in the soft light that fell from the lamp-shade. Camille, sinking in an arm chair, thought of his additions in the office. If a word was spoken, it was spoken in a low voice and disturbed the peace of that sleepy hollow only for a moment.

Madam Raquin looked upon her children with a serene benevolence. She had decided to marry them together. She always treated her son as a convalescent. She trembled at the thought that she would die some day and leave him alone, suffering. She, therefore, counted on Therese to look after his son when she was gone. She said to herself that the young girl would keep a careful watch over Camille. Her niece, with her tranquil airs, and her silent devotion, inspired her with unbounded confidence. She had seen her at work. She wished to give her to his son as a guardian angel. That marriage was already an event that had been previously decreed.

The youths had already reached an age when they should marry. They had already been brought up into that idea, so that it had become familiar and quite natural to them. They talked of this marriage in the family as if it was necessary and inevitable. Madam Raquin had said, "We are waiting for Therese to attain her twenty-first year". And they all awaited patiently, without excitement, without blushing.

Camille, who had been enfeebled by illness, never experienced the desires of adolescence. He still remained a little child to his cousin. He kissed her as he would kiss his mother, just by habit, without any excitement. He looked upon her as an obliging companion who saved him many an annoyance, and who on occasions prepared his medicines. When he played with her or took her in his arms, he would behave just as if he was holding a boy. His flesh never had a thrill. Never, on such occasions, when

Therese was struggling with him and laughing nervously, did he think of kissing the warm lips of the girl.

The young girl also appeared to be cold and indifferent. She often rested her big eyes on Camille and regarded him for a few minutes with the calmness of a Sovereign. Only her lips showed a very slight and imperceptible twitching. One could never read from her face anything but a calm attention. When they talked of her marriage, Therese became grave. She appeared to give her consent to all that Madam Raquin said, simply by a movement of her head. Camille, on the other hand, always went to sleep on such occasions.

During summer evenings, the two youths escaped to the river-side. Camille was irritated by the incessant care of his mother. He revolted against her, wished to run away, or fall ill, in order to escape the disgusting cajolery of his mother. Therefore, he dragged Therese; he provoked her to fight, or to sprawl on the grass. One day he pushed her cousin and let her fall down. The young girl got up with a bound. With a savage energy and with her face flushed, and eyes red, she threw herself on Camille. He slipped to the ground. She awes frightened.

Years and months passed in this way. The day fixed for the marriage arrived. Madam Raquin took Therese apart and told her about her father and mother. She recounted the history of her birth. The young girl listened to her aunt, and then kissed her without uttering a word.

That night, Therese, instead of going to her own room which was situated to the left of the stair-case, entered the room of her cousin, which was to the right. This was all the change which she had on that day of her marriage. The following morning, when the young couple came down, Camille was still in his sickly apathy. Therese had her indifference still, her face repressed with a hideous calmness.

III

A week after their marriage, Camille declared clearly to his mother his intention to leave Vernon and to go to live at Paris. Madam Raquin was taken aback. She had arranged her life and did not want to make any change in it. Her son had an attack of nerves which threatened to be serious if she did not yield to his caprice.

"I never opposed you in your plans", he said to her, "I married my cousin, I took all the drugs that you gave me. That was good at least. Today that I have expressed a wish, and you know my opinion.....we shall leave for Paris at the end of this month."

Madam Raquin could not sleep that night. Camille's decision upset her life. She had to rebuild it. Gradually, she was calmed down. She thought that the young couple will have children and the little money that they had will not be enough in Paris. It was necessary to earn more money by opening a shop in Paris, and finding a lucrative occupation for Therese. By the next morning she accustomed herself to the idea of leaving for Paris. She had thought out her plans for a new life.

At breakfast she was quite gay.

"This is what we are going to do", she told her children, "I shall go to Paris tomorrow, look for a small mercer's shop, and Therese and myself will set up as merchants of wool and knitting needles." This will keep us engaged. You, Camille, must do as you like. You can walk in the sun, or find an employment."

"I shall find an employment", replied the young man.

The truth was that an ambition had caught hold of Camille which alone forced him to depart for Paris. He desired to be employed in a big administrative capacity. He dreamed of being at the head of a big office, with a well polished table and quills, and a number of subordinates to obey him.

Therese was not consulted. She had always showed such a passive obedience that her aunt and her husband never took the trouble of knowing her opinion. She would go where they would go. She would do what they would do, without murmur, without reproach, without even appearing to know that she had changed the place.

Madam Raquin went to Paris and proceeded direct to Pont-Neuf. An old woman of Vernon had given her the address of her parents who had been carrying on the business of a mercer there, but which they desired to sell. The old mercer found the shop rather small and a little dark. But going through Paris she had been frightened by the noise of the streets, and by the luxury of the window shops. This narrow gallery and its modest window shops, therefore, reminded her of her own old shop in Vernon so painfully. She remembered her own time in the Province, she recollected how her children were happy in that neglected corner of the earth. She gave a deep sigh. The small price that was demanded for this shop in the passage finally decided her on its purchase. The price of the goods in the shop was settled at Two thousand Francs. The rent of the small shop and the first

floor above it was only twelve Francs per month. Madam Raquin, who had saved about four thousand Francs from her economies, thought that she would be able to pay for the goods and the first year's rent without encroaching on her investments. The earnings of Camille and the profit from the mercer's shop would suffice, thought she, for the daily needs, so that here again her fortune would not be touched. The income from investments would, therefore, go to increase the capital that she wanted to leave for her grand children as a legacy.

She returned beaming to Vernon. She said that she had found a pearl, a delicious jewel, in the heart of Paris. Little by little, by the end of a few days, she wove round the little shop in the humid and obscure passage, a fascinating story which painted it as a palace. In her mind she saw it once again as a comfortable, large, quiet abode with a thousand and one unknown advantages.

"Ah, my good Therese", said she, "You will see how happy we are in that house. There are three beautiful rooms on the first floor.... The passage is always full of people...We shall display the goods charmingly in the shop window...Enough, we shall worry no more."

She could never finish her inexhaustible description. All her old business instincts of a merchant revived themselves. She already began to give tips to Therese on how to sell, how to purchase and on so many other tricks of commerce. At last, the family quitted the house near the Seine. The same evening they were installed in the passage of the Pont-Neuf.

When Therese entered the shop where she was going to live henceforth, she felt that she was in a slippery hole in the ground. A sort of a nausea took hold of her. She began to shudder with fear. She looked out upon the dirty and damp gallery. She inspected the shop, ascended the first floor, and went round every room. Those empty rooms without furniture were frightening with their isolation and shabbiness. The young woman found no enthusiasm in the new house, but did not utter even a word about it. She looked as if she were frozen. Her aunt and her husband having come down, she sat on a box with chaffed hands, throat almost choked with sobs. But she could not cry.

Face to face with reality, Madam Raquin felt embarrassed, ashamed of the beautiful dreams that she had dreamt about the place. She tried to defend her account of the new place. She found an excuse for every defect in that house. She tried to explain away the darkness of the house by saying that the weather was cloudy. Finally, she affirmed that a little cleaning would restore the house.

"Bah !" said Camille, "All this is quite convenient. Besides, we shall not ascend the first floor except at night. So far as I am concerned, I shall not return before five or six in the evening. As far as you two, you shall have each other's company and will therefore not feel dull."

Never could the young man have consented to live in such a hole, if he had not counted upon the peaceful and clean office that he expected to command very soon, in his dreams.

He said to himself that in his office it will be warm throughout the day. Here in the house, he will go to bed early to avoid cold.

For the greater part of the week, the shop and the house remained in disorder. From the very first day, Therese took her seat behind the counter and did not change it. Madam Raquin was surprised at that depressed attitude. She had believed that the young woman would decorate the house, put flowers on the windows, buy new paper, new curtains, and carpets etc. When she proposed anything about the rearrangement of the house, Therese replied "What's the good? We are quite happy. We do not need any luxuries."

It was Madam Raquin who arranged the rooms and put some sort of an order in the shop. Therese became impatient seeing Madam Raquin always moving before her eyes. She engaged a maid-servant and compelled her aunt to sit near her.

Camille remained without any employment for about a month. He stayed in the shop as little as possible. He strolled about for the whole day. He got so annoyed having nothing to do that he talked of returning to Vernon. At last, he found employment in the office of the Orleans Railway. He was paid one hundred Francs per month. In this way his dream was partly fulfilled.

In the mornings, he went to work at 8 o'clock. He took the Guenegaud Road and then turned towards the wharves on the way to his office. Then he followed the river Seine slowly, with his hands in his pocket, from the

Institute to the Botanical Gardens. This long course he took twice a day to go to and come from his office, and was never tired of it. Sometimes he regarded the river water, sometimes he stopped to see the trains of charcoal boats moving on the river. He never thought of anything. Sometimes he stopped before Notre-Dame and contemplated the scaffolding with which the church was then covered, for repairs were going on. Those big pieces of timber in the scaffolding amused him, without his knowing why. Then he threw a glance, in passing, at the Port Aux Vins. He counted the carriages that were coming from the Railway Station. In the evening, stupefied, his head full of some silly anecdote which he heard in his office, he crossed the Botanical Gardens and came to see the bears in the Zoo, as he was not at all pressed for time. He spent about half an hour there, bending over the bear-pit, following the eyes of the bears which slouched heavily. The steps of those big beasts pleased him. He examined them with his mouth and round eyes wide open. He experienced an imbecile joy in this without even stirring. Then, he decided to return home, dragging his steps heavily, occupying himself with the passers-by, the carriages, or the shops.

On reaching home, he dined and then read some books. He had purchased the works of Buffon, and every evening he sat down to finish 20 or 30 pages, in spite of the boredom that it involved. He also read the cheap ten-penny editions of the *Histoire du Consulat* by Thiers and the *Histoire des Girondins* by Lamartine or many such popular scientific works. He

believed in educating himself. Often he forced his wife to listen while he read or recounted certain stories. It often surprised him to see that Therese could remain quiet and pensive throughout the whole evenings, without being tempted to take up a book. At heart, he admitted that his wife had little intelligence.

Therese pushed away the books with impatience. She preferred to remain idle with her eyes fixed and her thoughts obsolete. At the same time she kept a facile humour. All she wished was to make herself a passive instrument, with a supreme complaisance.

The business progressed slowly. The profits were regularly the same every month. The customers consisted mostly of the poor workers in the locality. Every five minutes, a young girl would enter the shop, and buy something for a few pennies. Therese served her customers with the same words always, and with a smile that appeared mechanically on her lips. Madam Raquin, on the other hand, appeared to be more clever and more talkative. To tell the truth, it was she who attracted and kept her customers.

For three years, the days followed days with the same monotony. Camille did not absent himself from office even for a single day. His mother and his wife hardly left their shop. Therese, living in a dark and humid house located in a gloomy and silent passage, saw before her a life that was empty and had no attractions. It brought her every night the same cold bed, and every morning the same dull day.



IV

Once every week, on Thursday evenings, the Raquin family received friends. A big lamp was lighted in the Dining room and a big kettle was placed on fire for tea. All that was a very interesting story. That evening was the most outstanding in the life of the family. It had passed into the life of the family as a regular habit when they enjoyed the gaiety of Bourgeois life. They went to bed about midnight.

At Paris Madam Raquin met one of her old friends, Mr. Michaud, the Commissioner of police, who had worked for about 20 years at Vernon living in the same house as the old mercer. A close friendship had grown up between them. Then the old widow sold off her property and went to live in the house near the Seine. Gradually they lost sight of each other. Michaud left the country a few months later and came to Paris to enjoy his pension, of one hundred and fifteen Francs, in retirement. On a rainy day, he came across the old friend in the passage of Pont-Neuf. The same evening he was invited to dine with the Raquins.

Thus were laid the foundations of the Thursday receptions. The old police commissioner developed the habit of coming punctually once every week. He ended by bringing his son Olivier, a big boy of 30 years, lean and thin, who had married a very small girl, dull and sickly. Olivier worked in the police office earning three thousand Francs per month, of which Camille appeared to be particularly jealous.

He was the chief clerk in the police office connected with peace and order. From the very first day, Therese detested this boy who appeared as if he honoured by his presence the shop in the Passage. To Therese, he appeared to bring in cold with his huge body and the fits of his poor little wife.

Camille introduced another invitee to the house. He was an old employee in the Orleans Railway. His name was Grivet. He had put in 20 years' service in the office. He was the chief clerk, getting two thousand Francs per month. It was he who assigned work to the clerks serving in the office in which Camille was working. He showed certain consideration for Camille. Camille said to himself that one day Grivet will die and he himself may replace him, perhaps by the end of another 10 years. Grivet was pleased to make the acquaintance of Madam Raquin. He came every week with perfect regularity. Six months later his Thursday visit became a duty for him. He came to the passage of Pont-Neuf, as he went every morning to his office, mechanically by an instinct.

From then the reunions on Thursday evenings became charming. At seven, Madam Raquin lighted the fire, placed the lamp in the middle of the table, placed the dominos by its side, cleaned the Tea service which was on the side-board. At eight, precisely, the old Michaud and Grivet met each other before the shop, one coming from the Rue de Seine another coming from the Rue Mazarine. When they entered, the whole company ascended to the first floor. They took their seats round the table, waiting

for Olivier and his wife who always arrived a little late. When the company was complete, Madam Raquin poured out the tea, Camille emptied the dominos on the table cloth, and each plunged himself into the play. They heard nothing but the clicking sound of the dominos. After every game the players quarrelled among themselves for two or three minutes. Then silence fell again, disturbed only now and then by the noise of the dominos.

Therese played indifferently which irritated Camille. She put on her lap Francois, the big tiger cat, which Madam Raquin had brought from Vernon. She carassed the cat with one hand, and with the other she dealt out the dominos. The Thursday evening was for her a penance. Often she feigned illness, or severe headache, so that she might be left out and remain idle and drowsy. She watched the guests of her aunt and her husband with half-closed eyes through the pale light of the lamp, holding her head in her hands. All those people exasperated her. She looked from one to the other with profound disgust and secret irritation. The old Michaud had a pale face with a few blotches of red. Grivet had round eyes and thin lips of an idiot. Olivier appeared grave with his ridiculous insignificant head on a big body. As for Suzanne, the wife of Olivier, she was very pale, with vague eyes, blanched lips and flabby face. Therese did not find even one individual, even one person among all those grotesque creatures with whom she was shut up, living. Then she began to have hallucinations. She believed herself to be buried in a cave, in the company of the dead who raised their heads mechanically or moved

their limbs as if some one was pulling them by a string. The thick heavy air of the dining hall choked her. The oppressive silence, and the yellowish light of the lamp, put a vague fear in her which she could not describe.

The door to the shop had been fitted with a bell which rang as any one entered the shop. Therese always waited for the bell to ring, so that she could escape from her ordeal. As soon as a customer entered, the bell rang. She descended rapidly, happy to leave the Dining room. She served the customer slowly, and when she found herself alone she sat down behind the counter and remained there as long as possible. She was afraid to go back to the company in the Dining room and was really happy to be rid of Grivet and Olivier. The humid air of the shop cooled down her fever a little. And she fell into her usual reverie.

But she could not remain there for long. Camille got angry at her absence. He did not understand why she preferred the shop to the Dining room on Thursday evenings. He therefore bent over the stair-railing and looked for his wife.

"Well," he shouted, "What are you doing there? Why don't you come back? Grivet has a devilish luck. He is about to win again."

The young woman rose unwillingly and returned to take her place opposite old Michaud whose protruding lips had an irritating smile on them. And until eleven o'clock, she remained afflicted on the chair, regarding the cat that she held in her arms, in order to avoid the grimaces of the doll-like faces all around her.

V

One Thursday, on return from his office, Camille was accompanied by a light-hearted, well-built youngman whom he pushed into the shop with some familiarity.

"Ma," he asked Madam Raquin pointing to the new-comer, "Do you recognise this gentleman?"

The old mercer looked at the young profligate, searched her memory, but she could not place him. Therese watched that scene with a placid air.

"Well," continued Camille, "Do you not know Laurent, the little Laurent, the son of Mr. Laurent who had such beautiful wheat farms near Jeufosse? Can you not remember him? I used to go to school with him. He used to come from his uncle's house, who was our neighbour, to fetch me in the mornings. You often gave him a slice of cake."

Madam Raquin remembered him suddenly. She found that Laurent had grown considerably tall and square. It was more than twenty years since she had not seen him. She desired him to forget the fact that she could not recognise him at the first sight. She bestowed on him her motherly affection. Laurent was seated, smiling quietly. He replied to her questions in a clear voice. He looked around him quietly.

"Do you know" said Camille, "that ass has been employed at the office of the Orleans Railway for the last eight months, and we did

not come across or recognise each other until this evening ? That railway office is so big and so important."

The young man made the last remark, opening his eyes wide open, to impress on those present that he himself was proud to be a humble part of that big machine. He continued, shaking his head :—

"Oh, but he is doing well. He has studied. He is already getting fifteen hundred Francs... His father had sent him to College. He took his degree and then learnt painting. Isn't it, Laurent?.. You are going to dine with us."

"I do not mind," replied Laurent simply.

He took off his hat and installed himself in the shop. Madam Raquin ran to her pots. Therese, who had not spoken a word so far, looked at the new-comer. She had never really looked at a man before. Laurent, by his size, by his strength, and by the freshness of his face, surprised her. She contemplated, with a sort of an admiration, his forehead covered with unpolished black hair, his rounded cheeks, his red lips, and his regular features of great beauty. Her eyes were arrested for a moment by his neck. That neck was short, fat and strong. Then she forgot herself so far as to consider his big hands which rested on his lap. His fingers were thick, and his closed fist must have been enormous and could have overpowered even a bull. Laurent was a real country lad, his gait, a little heavy, his back a little bulging, and his movement a little slow, but precise, his air tranquil but obstinate. His strong, round and developed muscles could be felt beneath his clothes. All his body was thick and firm flesh..

Therese examined him with curiosity, going from head to foot, and experiencing a peculiar thrill when she came to the bull-like neck.

Camille showed him Buffon's works and the ten-penny volumes to impress on his friend that he also studied. Then, as if in response to a question that was put to him for some moments...

"But," he said to Laurent, "you should meet my wife. Are you not reminded of that little cousin of mine who played with us at Vernon?"

"I recognise Madam very well," replied Laurent, looking at Therese full in the face.

Under his direct gaze which seemed to penetrate her, the young woman felt ill at ease. She forced a smile and exchanged a few words with Laurent and her husband. Then she hastened to join her aunt. She was suffering.

They sat down at table. From the moment the soup was served, Camille engaged himself with his friend.

"How is your father?" He enquired from him.

"I do not know," replied Laurent. "We have broken off. It is five years since we have not written to each other."

"Bah!" ejaculated Camille astonished at such a monstrosity.

"Yes. The dear old man had his own ideas... As he is always engaged in litigation with his neighbours, he sent me to college in the hope that I should make a good advocate who would win his law-suits. Oh! Father Laurent had only profitable ambitions. He wanted to make the most out of his follies."

"And you did not want to become an advocate?" asked Camille, still more astonished.

"My God! No," replied his friend laughing. "For two years I made him believe that I was following the course, in order to draw the allowance of twelve hundred Francs that my father had allowed me. I lived with one of my college friends who is a painter. I also began to paint, for it amused me. The work is queer, but it is not tiring. We smoked and joked all the day."

On hearing this the Raquin family opened their eyes wide in surprise.

"Unfortunately," continued Laurent, "that could not last. My father came to know that I was deceiving him. He stopped my allowance and asked me to return home to till the land with him. I tried therefore to earn money by painting holy pictures. But there was no money in it. When I saw that I would die of starvation, I threw the art to the devil and found an employment. My father is going to die some day. I am waiting for that day when I can live without working."

Laurent talked in a calm voice. He just described in a few words a characteristic story which painted him in his true colours. At heart, he was a parasite, having great appetites and suppressed desires. That big strong body of his did not want to work; it only wanted to revel in idleness. He desired to be in satiation all the time. He wished to eat well, sleep well, satisfy his passions well without the risk of having to exert himself.

The profession of an advocate had frightened him, and he shuddered at the thought of tilling

the land. He took to the art of painting, hoping to find in it the work suited to a parasite. The painter's brush appeared to him to be a light instrument to hold. Then he thought that success in it was easy. He dreamed of a cheap, voluptuous life; a beautiful life full of women, comfortable *divans*, and good food and drinks. This dream lasted only so long as his father supplied him with money. But when the young man, who was already thirty, saw misery on the horizon, he set himself to think. He felt helpless before privations. He could not accept even a single day without bread in exchange for the greatest glory in art. As he had said, he sent the art therefore to the devil, the day he perceived that it will not satisfy his enormous hunger. His first attempts in painting were much below mediocrity. His rustic eye looked at nature with a wrong and coarse angle. His canvass was dirty and ill-prepared, so that the critics were prejudiced against him from the very beginning. Besides, he did not appear to be too vain for an artist. He was not much disappointed, therefore, when he had to throw away his brush. He was sorry only because he had to leave the picture gallery of his friend, that vast gallery in which he had enjoyed life voluptuously for four or five years. He regretted still more to lose the women who came to pose as models, and whose favours were at the disposal of his purse. Those gay persons had left him the legacy of the poignant desires of the flesh. He was, however, in his new employment. He lived well. He loved his work from day to day which was not fatiguing and which made him forget his inner struggles. There were only

two things that irritated him ; he missed the company of women, and the food that he bought at the restaurant for eighteen Francs did not satisfy his gluttonous hunger.

Camille listened to him and regarded him with the astonishment of a simpleton. That boy whose enfeebled body had never felt the desires of flesh dreamed childishly of the life of the picture-gallery that his friend described to him. He thought of the women who exhibited their naked body. She asked Laurent :

"So, there were women," he said, who would take off their underwear before you ?"

"Why not ?" replied Laurent with a smile and looking at Therese who had become very pale.

"That should have produced a singular effect on you," added Camille laughing as a child. "I should be upset...The first time you must have looked like a fool."

Laurent lifted one of his big hands and regarded attentively its palm. His fingers made the slightest movement and his cheeks became slightly flushed.

"The first time," he replied as if talking to himself, "I believe I found it quite natural... That devilish art is very interesting. Only it does not bring a single penny. I had a Russian to act as model for me. She was adorable with her firm and dazzling body, with her superb breasts, and her hips as large as....."

Laurent raised his head and saw Therese before him, quiet and motionless. The young

woman regarded him with fixed eyes. Her lustreless and dull eyes appeared to be two fathomless holes, and through her half-opened lips one could perceive the rosy colour of the interior of her mouth. She appeared to be crushed and huddled up against her own self. She listened.

Laurent looked from Therese to Camille. The ex-painter restrained a smile. He completed his sentence by a large and voluptuous gesture of the hand which the young woman followed with her eyes. They had reached the dessert, and Madam Raquin descended to the shop to serve some customer.

When the table cloth was removed, Laurent, who had been dreaming for some minutes, addressed Camille suddenly :

"You know," he told him, "I must paint your portrait."

That proposal enchanted Madam Raquin and her son. Therese remained silent.

"As it is summer," said Laurent, "and as we leave office at four o'clock, I can come here and you can sit for the portrait for two hours every evening. That will be the work of eight days."

"That is right," replied Camille excited with joy, "You will dine with us afterwards. I shall curl my hair, and shall put on my black frock coat."

It struck eight. Grivet and Michaud made their appearance. Olivier and Suzanne followed them.

Camille presented his friend to the company. Grivet bit his lips. He detested Laurent who, according to him, had received rapid promotions. Besides, it was entirely a new affair to introduce another guest. The guests of Raquins could not receive an unknown person without some reserve.

Laurent behaved himself like a good boy. He understood the situation. He wanted to please and be accepted by the company at once. He recounted tales and made the evening gay by his loud laughter. He gained the friendship of Grivet himself.

That evening Therese did not attempt to leave the company by descending to the shop. She stayed in her chair until eleven, playing and talking, avoiding Laurent's glances, who, however, did not occupy himself with her. But the lively spirit of the boy, his full voice, his laughter, the strong odour that escaped from his body, all these troubled the young woman who was thrown into a sort of nervous anguish.

VI

From that day on Laurent visited the house of Raquins almost everyday. He used to live in Rue Saint Victor opposite to Port-aux-Vins in a small furnished cubicle for which he paid ten francs a month. That cubicle was situated at the last story of the house and really occupied the skylight of the house. It opened to the sky and was hardly more than six square metres. Laurent returned to his cubicle as late as possible. Before meeting Camille, as he had not enough money to go and spend in the cafes, he lingered in the milk shop where he dined in the evenings and smoked his pipe, buying a little gloria for about three pence. Then he slowly regained Rue Saint Victor strolling all along the wharves, sitting on the benches whenever the air was warm.

The shop in the passage of Pont-Neuf became for him a charming retreat, warm, quiet, and full of loving words and attentions. He now saved the three pennies that he paid for his gloria and drank excellent tea that Madam provided him with. Up to ten o'clock, he remained there discussing and smoking as if he was in his own home. He did not leave the shop until after having helped Camille to bar it for the night.

One evening he brought his easel and his colour box. He was going to start the portrait from the next day. A convass was purchased, and elaborate preparations were made. At last, the artist set himself to work in the room which was occupied by the husband. He said that the light in that room was good.

It took him about three evenings in designing the head. He drew with great care his design in charcoal by a few poor strokes which recalled the primitive efforts. He copied Camille's face in the way in which children do it in a painting school, with hesitant hand, with wrong perspective. This gave the portrait a sullen appearance. On the fourth day, he put all the colours on the palette and began to paint the portrait with a brush. He started the work as he had done with the pencil. He made the hatching short and broken.

At the close of every sitting, Madam Raquin and Camille admired the work enthusiastically. Laurent said that it was necessary to wait, to appreciate the full effect, until the portrait was complete.

Since the portrait had been commenced, Therese did not like to leave the room which had been converted into the studio. She left her aunt alone behind the counter in the shop. Even on the slightest pretext she went upstairs and forgot herself in watching Laurent painting the portrait.

Always grave, oppressed, paler and quieter, she sat and followed the work of the brush. That work did not itself amuse her much. She came to that room simply because she was attracted by some force and remained there as if nailed down by it.

Laurent often turned about, smiled at her and asked her if the portrait pleased her. She hardly ever replied, thrilled a little, then again watched the operation with ecstasy.

When Laurent returned to his room in Rue Saint Victor he often had long debates with himself. He discussed with himself if he should not become the lover of Therese.

"Here is a little woman," he said to himself, "who will be my mistress whenever I want her. She is always there, at my back, watching me, weighing me, and measuring me.....She trembles; she has quite funny features. She is mute and passionate. Certainly, she is in need of a lover. One can see it in her eyes. It must be said that Camille is a poor husband."

Laurent laughed within himself at the recollection of the pale and thin body of his friend. Then he continued,

"She must be bored in that shop. I go there simply, because I do not know where else to go. If this were not so, they would not see me in the passage of Pont-Neuf. For it is wet and dull. A woman would die in that. I please her, I am certain of it. Well, why not I now, than somebody else later?"

He checked himself. He felt nervous. Then he looked at the river Seine with an air of absorption.

"My God! What a pity," he cried to himself, "I shall embrace her at the first occasion. I bet that she will fall into my arms at once."

He began to walk. In decision took hold of him again.

"It is because she is ugly, after all." Thought he, "She has a long nose and a big mouth. Besides I do not love her. I may fall into a trap. This requires thought."

Laurent, who was very prudent, revolved these thoughts in his mind for more than a week. He thought of all the possible incidents that may arise in a liaison with Therese. He decided to undertake the adventure only if it could be proved to be in his real interest.

It is true that to him Therese was ugly and that he did not love her. But, on the other hand, she would cost him nothing. It is also true that the women that he got at low price were neither more beautiful, nor did he love them more than he did Therese. The idea of economy tempted him to take the wife of his friend. Besides, for a long time he had not satisfied his hunger. As money was scarce, he had crushed the desires of his flesh. He did not wish therefore to let slip this opportunity of enjoying himself a little. Finally, such a liaison, if well thought out, could not produce bad results. It would be in Therese's interest to hide everything. Even admitting that Camille came to know everything and got angry, he could easily put all the blame on Therese, whenever he wished it. If Camille thought of doing any mischief he (Laurent) could always vanquish him with his fist. From whatever angle he looked at the question, it appeared to him easy and attractive.

From then onward, he quietly and patiently waited for the hour. He was resolved that at the very first opportunity he would act. He

thought of the coming summer evenings, when the whole Raquin family would work for his pleasures. Therese would quench the fires of his blood; Madam Raquin would cajole him as a mother; Camille, by talking to him in the evenings in the shop, would relieve him of boredom.

The opportunity will not occur, after the portrait is finished. Therese was always there, overwhelmed and anxious. But Camille never left the room, and Laurent was dejected that he could not get him away even for an hour. One day, he had to announce that the portrait would be ready the following day. Madam Raquin declared that they would all gather together and celebrate the occasion at a dinner in honour of the artist.

The following day, when Laurent put the finishing touches to the canvas, the whole family gathered together to admire the resemblance. The portrait itself was ignoble, of a dirty, grey colour, with large, ugly blotches. Laurent had failed to get a colour harmony. He had, in spite of him, exaggerated the paleness of his model. Camille's face in the portrait therefore looked greenish, as if it was the face of a drowned man. But Camille was enchanted. He said that on the canvas he had a 'distinguished' air.

When he had admired his portrait enough, he declared that he would go and buy two bottles of champagne. Madam Raquin went back to the shop. The artist was alone with Therese.

The young woman rested crouching, vaguely looking before her. She appeared to be thrilled. Laurent hesitated. He examined the canvas.

He toyed with the brush. The time was passing. Camille could return any moment. The opportunity may perhaps never occur. Suddenly, the artist turned and found himself face to face with Therese. They looked at each other for a few seconds.

Then, by a sudden movement, Laurent bent down and took the young woman in his arms. He turned her head towards him, and crushed her lips with his own. She seemed to revolt a little. Then, she yielded herself all of a sudden, and slipped to the ground, lying on the cushion. They did not exchange even a single word. The act, though painful, was finished in silence.

VII

From the very commencement, the lovers found their liaison necessary, fated, and quite natural. At their very first meeting, they began to use words of endearment, and embraced each other without embarrassment, without shame, as if their intimacy had lasted for several years. They were quite at ease in their new situation, with tranquillity and perfect impudence.

They fixed their meeting place. As Therese could not go out, it was decided that Laurent should come. The young woman explained to him in a voice, both clear and full of assurance, the means that she had found out. The meeting was to take place in the room occupied by the husband and the wife. The lover would come by a gallery that opened into the passage. Therese would open him the door of the staircase. All this time Camille would be at his office, Madam Raquin, down below, in the shop. The very audacity of the plan should assure its success.

Laurent accepted it. In his prudence, he felt some sort of a temerity in this plan, the temerity of a man who has the big fists. The calm air of his mistress encouraged him to come and taste the joys so boldly offered. He thought of a pretext. He would take two hours' leave from his chief and run to the passage of Pont-Neuf.

The moment he entered the passage, he felt the burning passion. The merchant who sold imitation jewellery was seated just opposite to the gallery. He must wait until she was

occupied. A young labourer came to buy a copper ring or a pair of ear-rings. Rapidly, Laurent entered the gallery. He ascended the narrow and dark stairs, taking support on the slippery and wet walls. His shoes struck the stone steps. At the sound of every step, he felt a shiver pass through the spine. A door opened. On the landing, in the midst of a white light, he saw Therese in her transparent jacket and skirt, her hair falling at the back of her head. She shut the door. She threw herself on his neck. There emanated from her a pleasing odour, the odour of clean white dress and of her freshly washed flesh.

Laurent was surprised. He found that his mistress was beautiful. She had never seen that woman. Therese, supple and strong, drew him, throwing her head back. On her face was an ardent passion, and the smiles of desire. Her face was transfigured. She had a mad and a caressing look. Her lips were moist, her eyes shining. She was beaming with joy. The young woman, writhing and surging, had a strange beauty in her. She was full of emotions. One could say that her figure was being illuminated from within her; that her flesh was throwing out flames. Her blood was heated, her nerves were straining, and all around her there was warmth, and a penetrating and pungent air.

At the very first kiss, she revealed herself to be a courtesan. Her unsatisfied body threw itself into voluptuousness. She awoke from a dream. Her passion was roused. She passed from the weak and debilitated arms of Camille to the strong ones of Laurent. The proximity.

of that strong man suddenly gave her shock after shock which aroused her sleeping flesh. All the instincts of a passionate woman showed themselves with an unprecedented violence. Her mother's blood, that African blood which was burning in her veins began to flow furiously in her thin body, which was still almost virgin. She exhibited herself ; she offered herself with impudence. And she shook with thrills from head to foot.

Laurent had never known a woman like her. He was surprised, and was rather ill at ease. Ordinarily, his mistresses had never received him with such warmth. He was accustomed to cold and indifferent kisses, to bored and satiated love. The sighs and cries from Therese nearly frightened him. They aroused his voluptuous curiosity. When he left the young woman, he staggered like an intoxicated person. Next morning when his calm and prudence had been restored, he asked himself if he should return to his lover whose kisses had fired him so much. At first, he plainly decided that he would stay away from her. Then, he had the weakness. He wished to forget her, not to see Therese in her nudity, not to be in her caresses. But he could never put her out of his mind. She was always there, inexorable, extending her arms. That thought caused him an unbearable suffering.

He yielded. Another meeting was fixed. He came back to the passage of the Pont-Neuf.

From that day on, Therese became part of his life. He did not *accept* her now, but he *submitted* to her. He had his moments of fright,

his moments of prudence. In short, the liaison progressed disagreeably. But all his fears, all his uneasiness gave way before his desires. The meetings followed, and became more and more frequent.

Therese had no doubts, no hesitation. She gave herself up without caution, without doubts, going straight to where her passion took her. That woman whom circumstances had forced to cover herself and to dress, was really happy when she was nude. Her entire being expressed itself really in nudity.

Occasionally she put her arms around Laurent's neck, and lay on his chest. And in a voice still panting:

"Oh, if you only knew," she said, "how much I suffer! I have been brought up in the overheated atmosphere of a sick man's room. I slept with Camille. At night, I used to draw away from him, irritated at the sickening odour of his body. He was mischievous and obstinate. He did not wish to take the medicines that I would not share with him. To please my aunt, I used to take all the drugs. I do not know why I did not die.....They made me ugly. My poor friend, they have robbed me of all I had, and you cannot love me as I love you."

She cried. She embraced Laurent and continued with a secret hatred, "I do not wish them any ill. They have brought me up. They have sheltered me and defended me against misery.....But I should have preferred being neglected to their hospitality. I needed open air. When I was very small, I dreamed of running on the streets, with my naked feet in the

dust, begging alms, and living like a Bohemian. They told me that my mother was the daughter of a tribal chief in Africa. I often thought of her. I understood that I belonged to her by blood and by instinct. I wished never to have left her. I wished to be crossing the sands, hanging on her back.....Ah'. What a childhood. Even now I feel the disgust and revolt when I think of the long days that I had to pass in the room where Camille lay snoring. I used to crouch before the fire, stupidly looking at the concoctions that were boiling, and feeling my limbs stiffening. I could not move, for my aunt grumbled when I made any noise. Later on, I tasted the first profound joy in the small house near the river. But I was already weak. I hardly knew how to walk. I fell down when I tried to run. Then, they buried me all alive in this ignoble shop."

Therese took a deep sigh. She locked her lover in her arms. She would avenge. And her thin and supple nostrils throbbed nervously.

"You cannot believe," she added, "how wicked they have made me. They have made me a hypocrite and a liar. They have stuffed me with their bourgeois softness. I cannot explain to myself how there is still blood in my veins. I have cast my eyes down. I have, like them, a dull and imbecile face. I have lived their dead life. Did you not think so, when you first saw me? I had the air of a beast. I was grave, crushed, and stupid. I never hoped for anything. I thought of throwing myself one day in the Seine.....But before that business what frightful nights I had! Down there, at Vernon, in my cold room, I pinched my ears in

order to stifle my cries. I fought. I called myself a coward. My blood boiled, and I tortured my body. A second time, I wished to run away. But my courage failed me. They had made me, with their weak benevolence and their disgusting tenderness, a docile beast. I lied. I have lied always. I have remained calm and silent, dreaming to strike and to murder."

The young woman stopped, wiping her moist lips on Laurent's neck. She continued, after a little silence :

20458 "I do not know at all why I agreed to marry Camille. I never protested, because of a disdainful carelessness. That child aroused pity in me. When I played with him, I felt my fingers were digging into clay, whenever I pressed his limbs. I accepted him, because my aunt offered him to me, because I thought that I would never have to trouble myself about him. And I have found in my husband that little sickly child with whom I had already slept when I was six. He is still as frail, as complaining, and still has the same sickening odour that he had when he was a child, and which disgusted me then and has disgusted me ever since. I tell you all this so that you may not be jealous. A sort of a disgust rises in me, as I think of all the drugs that I had to take ; as I think of my loneliness, and as I think of the terrible nights that I have passed.....But you, you..."

Then Therese dressed, and tied her hair. She took the thick fingers of Laurent in her hand, and regarded his big shoulders, and his enormous neck.

"I love you. I loved you the day Camille brought you to the shop. Perhaps you do not respect me, for I gave myself up to you at the very first attempt. True, I do not know how it happened. I am proud. I am emotional. I should have liked to fight you the first time when you embraced me and threw me on the ground in that room. I ignored how I loved you. I hated you rather. Your presence irritated me, made me suffer. When you were there, my nerves threatened to break. My head became empty. I saw red. Oh! how I suffered. And I sought for that suffering! I waited for your coming. I hovered round your chair to be near you, so that my clothes could touch yours. It seemed to me as if your blood threw me into fits of heat. It was that kind of ardent joy which enveloped you, and which, in spite of me, attracted me to you and kept me. You remember that when you were painting the portrait, how a sort of a force dragged me to your side? I liked to breathe the same delicious air that you breathed. I knew that you sought for kisses, I was ashamed of my bondage. I felt that I would succumb to you, if you touched me. But I yielded to my weakness. I shuddered with cold when I thought that you wanted to take me into your arms. . ."

Proud, avenged and shuddering, Therese then fell into silence. She held Laurent intoxicated on her breast. And in that cold and almost empty room were enacted the scenes of ardent passion. Every new meeting of the lovers brought a new crisis of ardour in their love.

The young woman was pleased with every audacity and impudence. She had no hesitation,

no fear. She threw herself into adultery with a sort of energy and freedom. She braved all perils; felt a sort of vanity in braving them. All the precaution that she took was that when her lover was expected, she announced to her aunt that she was going to sleep. When he was there with her in the room, she walked, talked, or cajoled without ever troubling about the noise that she made. Often, in the beginning, this frightened Laurent.

"My God!" He said in a low voice to Therese, "Don't make so much noise. Madam Raquin is going to come."

"Bah!" she replied, laughing, "You are always trembling. She is nailed to her counter. What do you think she will come here for? She is afraid she may not be robbed. Then, after all, if she does come up, let her. You will hide yourself. I shall joke with her. I love you."

Such words did not reassure Laurent. His passion had not sent to sleep the prudence and cunning of the peasant. Soon, however, he got used to the meetings held in the full daylight, in Camille's room, only a step from where the mercer was. His mistress repeated to him, oft and on, that danger flies from those who confront it. And she was right. Never could the lovers have found a place which was safer than that room where nobody could have searched for them. They carried on their love affair there in an unbelievable tranquillity.

One day, however, Madam Raquin ascended to the room fearing that her niece had been taken ill. It was about three o'clock when the young man was upstairs. She had the audacity

not to have bolted the door which opened into the dining-room.

When Laurent heard the heavy steps of the old mercer ascending the wooden staircase he was perturbed. He feverishly searched for his waist "coat and hat. Therese began to laugh at the singular look on his face. She took him by the arm forcibly, pushed him under the bed in a corner and said to him in a calm and low voice, "Now, there! Don't move."

She threw on him his clothes which were lying about and spread over them a white skirt of hers which she had taken off. She did these things with a brisk and precise motion, without losing her tranquillity. Then she lay on the bed, with her hair undone, half dressed, her face still flushed, and her body still shaking.

Madam Raquin slowly opened the door and went near the bed, suppressing the noise of her feet. The young woman feigned sleep. Laurent perspired under the white skirt.

"Therese," asked the mercer with kindness, "Are you ill, my girl?"

Therese opened her eyes, yawned a little, turned towards her, and in a slow voice replied that she had a very bad headache. She requested her aunt to let her sleep. The old woman returned, as she had come, without making a noise.

The two lovers, laughing in silence, embraced each other with a violent passion.

"You see very well," Therese said triumphantly, "that we should not fear anything

here. All these people here are blind. They do not love."

Another day, the young woman had a peculiar idea. Often she was mad. She was in delirium.

The tiger cat, Francois, was seated behind her in the middle of her room. Grave and motionless, it regarded the two lovers with round eyes. The cat appeared to examine them with care, without closing the eyelids, as if lost in some diabolical pleasure.

"Look at Francois." Therese said to Laurent "One may say that it understands everything, and that it is going to tell everything, this evening to Camille. I say! That will be serious, if she went to the shop to tell everything one of these days. It knows the whole of our story to our cost."

That idea, that Francois could talk, particularly amused the young woman. Laurent looked at the big green eyes of the cat and felt a shiver run through his body.

"That is how it will act," added Therese. "It will place itself in the shop and point at me with one of its paws, the other paw pointing at you. It will begin, 'This lady and the gentleman embrace each other vehemently in the room. They are not afraid of me. But as their criminal love disgusts me, I pray you to put both of them into prison. There they will not disturb me in my afternoon sleep!'"

Therese joked like a child. She mimicked the cat. She extended her hands like the claws of the cat. She bent her shoulders like the cat.

Francois remaining motionless like a stone, looked at her all the time. Her eyes alone appeared to be living. On the corners of its mouth there was just a slight movement, as if the animal was laughing in its sleeves.

Laurent was chilled to the bone. He found Therese's pleasantries ridiculous. He got up and turned the cat out of the room. In reality, he was afraid. He did not yet belong entirely to his mistress. He was still uneasy at heart, as he was at the first meeting with the young woman.

VIII

In the evenings, Laurent was perfectly happy in the shop. Ordinarily, he returned from office with Camille. Madam Raquin had developed for him a motherly love. She knew him to be spirited. She also knew that he had not enough to eat and that he lived in an attic. She therefore asked him that he would always find a place on her table. She loved that boy with an open heart which the old women usually have for people coming from the country side, bringing with them the memories of the past.

The young man made full use of the hospitality. After his return from the office, he took a stroll on the wharves with Camille. Both of them enjoyed this walk. They talked of many things. After the walk, they decided to dine with Madam Raquin. Laurent opened the door of the shop, as if he himself was the master. He sat astride, on the chair, smoking and spitting as if it was his own house.

Therese's presence did not embarrass him in the least. He treated the young woman with a frank amicability. He cut jokes with her and addressed to her the common gallantries without even a slight demur. Camille laughed and as his wife did not reply to his friend, except by monosyllables, he firmly believed that she detested both of them.

One day he went as far as to reproach his wife on what he said, 'her cold shoulder' to Laurent.

Laurent had guessed rightly. He had become the lover of the woman, the friend of the husband and the favourite child of the mother. Never had he been so satisfied in life. The Raquin family provided him with all the joys. Besides, his position in that family was quite natural to him. He talked with familiarity with Camille without any remorse. He did not even care what words or gestures he used towards him. For he was quite assured of his forbearance. The frankness with which he behaved, excused him for all his faults. In the shop, his mistress became entirely a different woman, who was not to be embraced, and who did not exist for him. If he did not embrace her before everybody, it was only because he was afraid that he would never be allowed to return to this house. That consideration alone checked him. Besides, he would have missed greatly the kindness of Camille and his mother. He did not bother about the consequences that the discovery of his liaison might bring him. He believed in acting as everybody in the world would act in his place. He was a poor and starved man. It was this consideration which made him careful in his attitude.

Therese, more excited, more passionate than he, was obliged to act her part. Thanks to the masterly hypocrisy which she had learnt, she played her part well. For about fifteen years, she had lied. She had affected illness, and she took pleasure in appearing gloomy. It cost her little to put a mask of death on her face. When Laurent entered, he found her grave, surly, with long nose and thin lips. She was ugly, rough and cross. She only acted her role, as she had

done so often, without exciting attention by her brusqueness. She felt a sarcastic pleasure in deceiving Camille and Madam Raquin. She was not like Laurent, busy in satisfying his sordid desires, unconscious of duty. She knew that she was doing wrong. Often, she felt a violent longing to leave the table and kiss Laurent, full on the lips, in order to show her husband and her aunt that she was not a fool, that she had a lover.

Sometimes, when her lover was not present, and there was no fear of betraying herself, she gave full play to her happiness, and she could not check herself from singing. Such sudden outbursts of joy pleased Madam Raquin who accused her niece of being too grave. The young woman bought flower pots and put them on the window of her room. She put new paper in it. She wanted to buy a carpet, curtains and expensive furniture. All that luxury was for Laurent.

Nature and circumstances seemed to have made that woman for Laurent. They pushed one towards the other. The woman, passionate and hypocritical, and the man, spirited and given to the life of a brute, nature had made them a suitable pair. Mutually, they were complementary to each other. In the evenings, at the dinner table, seeing the thick and smiling face of Laurent, before the mute and impenetrable mask of Therese, in the pale light of the lamp, one could perceive the force of their union.

Those were happy and peaceful evenings. In the silence, in the cool shade, they exchanged friendly words. They moved round the table after the dessert. They talked of a thousand and one things of the day, of their past experi-

ences and future hopes. Camille liked Laurent and Laurent seemed to bear him an equal affection. They exchanged between them phrases of devotion, kind and engaging remarks. Madam Raquin, her face placid, gave all attention to her children, in the peaceful air in which she lived. Their union was the union of old friends who were intimate and sincere at heart.

Therese, motionless and quiet like others, regarded those bourgeois joys with a smile. While her face kept its calm, at heart she mocked at them. She reminded herself that only a few hours before she was in the adjoining room half-naked, dishevelled, lying with Laurent. She recalled to herself every detail of that afternoon full of mad passion. She contrasted that lively scene with the dead scene that was before her eyes then. Ah! How well she deceived those good people! How happy she was in deceiving them with impudence and with success! It was there, only two steps away, behind that thin partition that she received a lover. It was there that she revelled in adultery. And her lover had become to her a stranger at this hour! He had become a stranger to her, but her husband's friend her husband who was a sort of an impotent intruder for her and for whom she could never care. That atrocious comedy, that trickery of life, that comparison between the ardent kisses of the afternoon and this indifference of the evening, fired anew the young woman's blood.

When Madam Raquin and Camille descended to the shop by any chance, Therese rose with a bound and was in the arms of her lover,

embracing and kissing, until they heard the sound of footsteps on the stairs. Then, with a quick movement she took her seat and put on her sullen appearance again. Laurent took up again his conversation with Camille that had been interrupted. That was like a light of rapid and blind passion in a dead and dark sky.

Thursday evenings were a little more animated now. Laurent decided not to miss the company. His prudence dictated that he should gain the friendship and esteem of Camille's friends. He must therefore listen to the nonsense of Grivet and the old Michaud. Michaud always told the same stories of murder and theft, while Grivet talked at the same time about his subordinates, his officers, and of his office. The young man took refuge near Olivier and Suzanne, who appeared to him to be less boring. Besides, he hated to play the dominoes.

It was on Thursday evenings, that Therese used to fix the day and hour of their next meeting. During the hubbub at the time of the departure, and when Madam Raquin and Camille accompanied their guests to the door, the young woman approached Laurent. She talked to him in a low voice, pulling his hand. Sometimes, on such occasions, when everybody's back was turned to them, in a spirit of bravado, she would kiss Laurent.

This life of passions lasted for eight months. The lovers lived in a complete paradise. Therese did not try for more, did not desire anything more. Laurent, pampered and fattened now, alone had the fear that their happiness may not last.

IX

One afternoon, when Laurent was going to leave the office to visit Therese who was awaiting him, his chief called him and informed him that he would not grant him leave in future. He had already abused the privilege, and it had been decided that if he left in future even once he would be dismissed.

Nailed to his chair, he was in despair until the evening. He must earn his bread. He could not afford to be shown the door. In the evening, the incensed face of Therese was a torture to him. He did not know how to explain his failure to keep the appointment that afternoon to his mistress. As Camille was shutting up the shop, he deliberately approached the young woman.

"We cannot meet any more." He said to her in a low voice. "My chief has refused to grant me leave to go out."

Camille returned. Laurent had therefore to retire without amplifying his explanation, leaving Therese stunned by that brutal declaration. Exasperated, not willing to admit that anybody could trouble himself about their meeting, she passed a sleepless night, thinking out wild plans about their meetings. On the following Thursday, she talked with Laurent hardly for a minute. Their anxiety was greater, because they did not know where to meet to discuss the whole thing without arousing suspicion. The young woman fixed another meeting, which also her lover could not keep. From that day, she had only one idea, to see him alone at any cost.

Fifteen days had passed, and Laurent could not approach Therese. He felt how necessary that woman had become to him. The voluptuousness to which he had become accustomed, created a new appetite in him, which was sharp and demanding. He looked for the embraces of his mistress like an obstinate and famished animal. A strong passion was smouldering in his blood. Now that he could not visit his love, that passion was making him blind. He loved to distraction. To his animal instinct, everything else was immaterial. He obeyed his instincts, he was led by them. There was a time when he would have laughed if somebody had accused him of being a slave to a woman. He was a slave to her now. Without his knowledge, the secret working of his desires had thrown him, bound hand and foot, to the caresses of Therese. At that time, he was afraid of forgetting his prudence. He dared not go to the passage of Pont-Neuf, for fear of committing some folly. He was no more the master of his actions. With the suppleness of a cat, his mistress had permeated every cell of his body. He needed that woman for keeping alive in the same way as one needs food and drink.

He would certainly have done something mad, if he had not received a letter from Therese, who wanted him to remain at home on the following evening. She promised to meet him there at about eight O'clock.

Leaving the office, he got rid of Camille on the pretext that he was tired and desired to go to bed at once. Therese played a similar game after dinner. She said that a customer had shifted to another quarter without paying and she

wanted to go and realise the money. The customer lived in Batignolles. Madam Raquin and Camille were unwilling to go as the distance was long and the road unsafe. They allowed Therese to depart calmly.

The young woman ran to Port-aux-Vins, slipping now and then on the pavement that was slippery, and jostled the passers-by as she was in a hurry. Her hands burned, while her face perspired. She appeared to be drunk. She ascended rapidly the steps in Laurent's hotel. At the sixth story, breathless and with half-dimmed eyes, she saw Laurent, bending over the rail, waiting for her.

She entered the loft. She took off her hat, and, fainting, supported herself against the bed.

The open window of the loft brought the fresh air of the night. The lovers remained in the bed for a long time. Suddenly, Therese heard the clock strike ten. She wished she had been deaf. She got up painfully. She found her hat, tied her ribbons, and sat down. She said in a slow voice :

"We must part."

Laurent fell on his knees before her. He took her hands.

"Good Night," she said without moving.

"It is too vague. When will you come again?" He asked.

She looked at his face.

"You wish to break it off?" She said.
"Well, then, it is true. I don't believe that I

shall come back. I have no pretext to make. I cannot invent one."

"Well, then, we must say good-bye."

"No, I do not wish it."

She pronounced these words in great anger. Then she added more gently without realising that she spoke without leaving the chair:

"I am going out."

Laurent was thinking. He thought of Camille.

"I do not wish him well," he said without naming the person, "But really he is a great obstruction. Can you not get rid of him? Send him out on a journey to some place far off."

"Oh, yes! Send him on a journey!" replied the young woman, raising her head, "You believe that a man like him would consent to go on a journey. There is no journey from which one cannot return. But he will survive us all. The people who have nothing but their breath never die."

There was a silence. Laurent moved, placed himself against his mistress supporting his head on her breasts.

"I had a dream," he said, "I wished to pass a whole night with you, sleeping in your arms and waking the next morning under your kisses. I wished to be your husband. You understand me?"

"Yes, yes!" replied Therese, shuddering.

And she bent over Laurent suddenly and covered his face with kisses. The strings of her hat rubbed against the young man's beard. She forgot that she was dressed and her clothes

might be crumpled. She spoke, sobbing and panting, in the midst of her tears.

"Do not say such things," she repeated, "for I do not have the strength to leave you. I shall remain there. Give me the courage soon. Tell me that we shall meet again. Isn't it that you need me and that some day we shall find the means to live together?"

"Then, come, come back tomorrow," replied Laurent whose hands were trembling.

"But I cannot come back. I have told you. I do not have the pretext to make."

She wrung her hands. She continued, "Oh! It is not the scandal that frightens me. If you wish I shall go straight to Camille and tell him that you are my lover. I shall return to you to sleep here. It is for you that I tremble. I do not wish to disturb your life. I wish to see you happy."

The young man's prudence returned.

"You are right," he said, "We must not act like children. Ah! only if your husband died...."

"If my husband died....." Therese repeated slowly.

"We shall marry. We shall not fear anything. We shall enjoy life fully. What a peaceful and happy life!"

The young woman straightened herself up. Her cheeks were pale. She regarded her lover with dim eyes. Her lips throbbed.

"Men die some day," she murmured, "Only it is dangerous for those who survive."

Laurent did not answer.

"Do you see that all the known means are bad," she continued.

"You do not understand me!" he said quietly, "I am not a fool. I wish to love you in peace. Only I thought that accidents sometimes do happen. That a stone might fall, that a tile may slip.....You understand? In that last case, it is the wind that is to blame."

They talked in a strange voice. He smiled and added in a caressing voice :

"Go. Be quiet. We shall love each other. We shall live happily.....As you cannot come. I shall arrange everything. If we remain for some months without seeing each other, let us not forget each other. Remember that I am working for our good."

He held Therese in his arms. She opened the door for departing.

"You are mine. Is it not?" He continued, "You promise to give yourself up to me entirely whenever I wish."

"Yes," cried the young woman, "I belong to you. Do with me as you wish."

They remained mute for a moment. Then Therese snatched herself away suddenly and, without turning her head, she left the room and descended the stairs. Laurent heard the noise of the steps that became more and more distant.

When he could hear it no more, he returned to his bed. The sheets were still warm. He buried his head into the pillows where Therese had rested her head. He felt that they still

smelt of the young woman. There was still the fragrance of her body. But now he could no more take her into his arms, except her phantom, which seemed, to hover around him. He felt feverish. He did not shut the window. Looking at the sky, he was engrossed in thought.

Until the morning, the same thought came to him. Before Therese came, he never thought of murdering Camille. He had talked of the death of Camille, irritated by the thought that he would not see his mistress any more. It was thus that a new point in his nature came to reveal itself. In the outbursts of his emotions, he set himself to thinking of the assassination.

Now, calmed and alone in the middle of the night, he planned the murder. The idea of death, thrown with despair between two kisses, returned to him pointedly. Laurent, shaken by want of sleep and enervated by the bitter feelings that Therese had left behind her, prepared the snare; considered all the points against it, and all the advantages which he would derive from the assassination.

All his interest lay in the crime. He said to himself that his father, the farmer of Jeufosse would not decide to die. He would, perhaps, live for another ten years, managing the dairy, living in his granery without woman. That idea exasperated him. On the contrary, if Camille was dead, he would marry Therese. He would inherit Madam Raquin. He would submit his resignation from the office and lead a comfortable life full of joy. So he was pleased to dream of the life of a parasite. He already saw himself to be idle, eating and sleeping, await-

ing with patience the death of his father. And when the reality confronted him in the middle of the dream, he was annoyed with Camille. He tightened his fists as if to assault him.

Laurent desired Therese. He wished to have her all to himself, always at his hand. If he did not dispose of the husband, the woman would escape him. He had told himself, she could not return. He would carry her off somewhere, but then they would both starve. He risked the least by killing the husband. This would raise no scandal. He would simply push off a man to occupy his place. In his peasant's brutal logic, he found that method excellent and to be natural. Even his native prudence advised him to adopt that rapid expedient.

He remained in his bed, lying on the pillow where Therese had placed her head. He took it between his dry lips. He breathed the light perfume still coming from it, and he remained thus without breathing, almost choking, seeing fire before his closed eyes. He wanted to know how he could kill Camille. Then when he could not breathe freely, he turned suddenly and, with eyes wide open, received the full force of the cold air coming through the window. He looked for stars in the blue sky. They also counselled him to murder.

He found nothing. As he had told his mistress, he was not a child, not a fool. He did not wish to use either the knife or the poison. He required a method whereby he could attain his object without danger. A sort of clever suffocation, without cry, without fear, would be a simple disappearance. His passion was bestirred and pushed him before it. All his being, how-

ever, urgently cried for prudence. He was too much of a coward to risk his peace. He would kill in order to live happily and in peace.

Gradually, sleep assailed him. The cold air had driven away the phantom of Therese. Laurent, fatigued, was overcome by a sort of sweet and vague numbness. Before sleeping, he decided that he would wait for a favourable opportunity. This thought of his made him murmur, "I shall kill him. I shall kill him." Five minutes later, he was sleeping peacefully.

Therese returned home at about eleven o'clock. Her head was on fire; her nerves strained, and she arrived at the passage of Pont-Neuf without being conscious of the road she had followed. The words she had heard at the Laurent's room were still ringing in her ears. She found Madam Raquin and Camille anxious and eagerly waiting for her. She simply answered their questions, saying that she could not see the customer and on her way back she had to wait for a long time for the Bus.

When she was in bed, she found the sheets cold and moist. Her limbs, still burning, had a shuddering repugnance. Camille was not long in going to sleep, and Therese regarded for a long time his pale face, which rested on the pillow by her side, with his mouth open. She drew away from him. It was with a considerable effort that she checked herself from choking him with her hands.

X

About three weeks passed. Laurent began his visit to the shop every evening again. He appeared weak and sick. Blue rings formed round his eyes. His lips became pale and cracked. But he maintained his calm. He regarded Camille in his face, who bore the same old friendship to him. Madam Raquin pampered even more the friend of the family, when she saw a sort of a dullness in him.

Therese had resumed her mute resignation. She was more than ever motionless, reserved and quiet. It appeared as if Laurent did not exist for her any more. She hardly looked at him, and spoke rarely to him. She treated him with perfect indifference. Madam Raquin who was sorry, through the goodness of her heart, at this attitude often said to the youngman, "Don't pay any attention to the cold attitude of my niece. I know her. Her face appears cold, but her heart is full of warmth and devotion."

The two lovers had no more rendezvous. Since the evening in the rue Saint-Victor, they never met alone. In the evenings, when they were face to face to each other, they were calm and like strangers to each other. But the storms of passion and desire ran through their flesh secretly. In Therese, there were emotions of joy, of weakness and cruel railleries. In Laurent, there were brutal suspicions, and poignant indecisions. None of them dared examine their deeper feelings, which filled their bodies like a thick and pungent vapour.

Whenever they could manage it, they held each other's hands without speaking, behind a door, in a brief but impetuous grasp. They mutually agreed to put their entire being into their hands. They could do nothing more than this holding of hands to appease their desires. They did not demand anything more. They waited.

One Thursday evening, before commencing the dominoes, the guests had, as usual, a round of conversation. One of the popular subjects of conversation was to talk to old Michaud about his old experience, to question him about the strange and sinister adventures in which he was mixed. Grivet and Camille listened to the stories of the ex-police commissioner with frightened faces and with open mouths, like small children who had heard about the '*Blue Beard*' and the '*Little Thumb*.' That terrified them as well as amused them. On that particular evening, Michaud, who had related the story of a murder whose details had made his audience shudder, raising his head, added :

"And they do not know all. The crimes still remain unsolved. Murderers often escape man's justice."

"How ?" said Grivet with astonishment, "Do you believe that there are people on the street who have committed murder and have not been arrested ?"

Olivier smiled with an air of disgust.

"My dear sir," he added in a gruff voice, "if they are not arrested, it is because people do not know they have committed murder."

That argument did not convince Grivet. Camille came to his rescue.

"Oh, I know Mr. Grivet's opinion," he said with some importance. "I like to believe that the police is quite efficient, and that I am not likely to be elbowed by a murderer on the pavement."

Olivier noticed a personal attack in this remark.

"Certainly, the police is quite efficient," he replied in a vexed tone. "But we cannot achieve the impossible. There are criminals who have learnt their art from the Devil himself. They will escape from God Himself. Is it not so, father?"

"Yes, yes," supported the old Mr. Michaud. "For example, when I was at Vernon... You will recollect it perhaps, Madam Raquin... a merchant was murdered on the open highway. The dead body was found cut into pieces in a ditch. The culprit was never apprehended. Perhaps he is alive even today. Perhaps, he is our neighbour, and perhaps Mr. Grivet is going to encounter him while going home."

Grivet became white as a sheet. He dared not turn his head. He imagined that the murderer was behind him. Besides, he took pleasure in being afraid.

"Well, no," he mumbled, without realising that he answered, "well no. I do not believe so. I also know a story. Once, a maid-servant was sent to prison for stealing the silver of her mistress. Two months later, the silver was found in the nest of a magpie, as they cut a tree. It was the magpie that was the thief.

The maid-servant was released. You see plainly that the culprits are always punished."

Grivet was triumphant. Olivier chuckled.

He said, "did they imprison the magpie?"

"That is not what Mr. Grivet means to say," replied Camille, angry at seeing his chief being ridiculed. "Mother, pass on the dominoes."

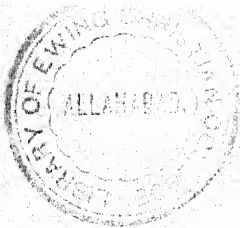
As Madam Raquin was passing on the dominoes, the young man continued, addressing himself to Michaud:

"Well. You acknowledge the police is impotent? There are murderers who go scot free?"

"Eh? Unfortunately, yes," replied the commissioner.

"It is immoral," concluded Grivet.

During this conversation, Therese and Laurent remained silent. They did not even smile at the foolishness of Grivet. Leaning over the table, slightly pale, their eyes vague, they listened. A moment later, their eyes met, dark and ardent. Small beads of perspiration appeared on Therese, while Laurent shuddered imperceptibly.



XI

Often, on Sundays, when the weather was fair, Camille forced Therese to go out with him for a promenade on the Champs-Elysees. The young woman would have liked to remain in the moist darkness in the shop. She was tired. She felt annoyed to be on the arms of her husband who dragged her on the pavement, stopping at the shops, astonished, thoughtful and silent like an imbecile. But Camille managed it well. He was pleased to show off his wife. Whenever he came across one of his colleagues from office, one of the chiefs especially, he was very proud to exchange a greeting in the company of his wife. Besides, he walked only for the sake of walking, without talking, rigid, like an ape in his Sunday dress, dragging his steps stupidly, vainly. Therese felt it as a torture to have such a man for company.

On these days of promenade, Madam Raquin accompanied her children to the end of the passage. There she kissed them as if they were setting out on a long journey. She made recommendations and entreaties without end.

"Specially, avoid accidents," she told them, "there are too many carriages in this Paris! You promise me not to get mixed in a crowd."

At last, she let them proceed, following them with her eyes. Then she returned to the shop. Her feet became heavy and prevented her from taking a long walk.

Another time, though more rarely, the couple went out of Paris. They went to Saint-Ouen or

to Asnieres and had their lunch in one of the restaurants on the river. It was the day of great revelling for which they planned a month in advance. Therese accepted such opportunity quite willingly and with joy, for it gave her the chance of remaining in the open air upto ten or eleven o'clock in the night. With its green islets, Saint-Ouen reminded her of Vernon. All her savage liking for the Seine that she had when a child, was revived there. She sat on the gravel, dipped her hands in the water, felt like living in the warmth of the sun which contrasted with the cold air of the darkened shop. While she tore and soiled her dress on the stones or on the muddy ground, Camille carefully took his handkerchief and sat down by her side with thousand and one precautions. Of late the young couple were invariably accompanied by Laurent who made their promenade lively with his laughter.

One Sunday, Camille, Therese and Laurent departed for Saint-Ouen at about eleven o'clock, after breakfast. The picnic had been planned a long time before, and was to have been the last that season. Autumn was approaching and the evening air had become chilly.

That morning, the sky was quite blue. The sun was hot, and the air was warm. They decided to remain out until the last rays of the sun had set.

The three picnickers took a carriage, followed by the warnings and grievances from the old woman. They crossed Paris and left the carriage near the fortifications. They reached Saint-Ouen by the road. It was noon. The

road was covered with dust, which reflected the rays of the sun. It had the whiteness of a blinding snow. The air was hot and thick. Therese walked slowly, on the arms of Camille, sheltering herself under his umbrella, while her husband fanned his face with a big handkerchief. Behind them, came Laurent whom the rays of the sun were biting on the neck, but he did not seem to mind them. He whistled. He kicked the pebbles, and, now and then, observed the movement of the hips of his mistress with feverish eyes.

When they arrived at Saint-Ouen, they looked for a bower of trees. A carpet of green turf lay in the shade. They found a copsewood in one of the islets where the dry leaves on the ground made a crackling sound under their feet. The tree trunks shook like innumerable columns of a Gothic structure. The branches of the trees touched the foreheads of the promenaders. They had, on the horizon, a copper coloured verdure formed by the dying leaves of the trees and their white and dark trunks. They were on a sort of a desert, in a melancholy hole, in a narrow opening that was quiet and cool. All around them the Seine flowed with a murmur.

Camille had selected a dry spot ; and gathering the flaps of his coat he seated himself down. Therese, with a great noise of her dress, just threw herself down on the leaves. She almost buried herself in the folds of her dress which she gathered all around her, and thus uncovered one of her legs upto the knee. Laurent, lying on his face, his coat thrown on the ground, watched that leg, while listening to his friend complaining against the government for not

having changed the whole place into an English garden with properly trimmed hedges, alleys and benches, as in the Tuileries.

They rested in that clearing for about three hours, waiting for the sun to go down a little, so that they could walk about for some time, before dinner. Camille talked about his office. He related silly stories. Then he was tired, turned himself over and went to sleep. He had covered his eyes with his hat. With her eyes closed, Therese pretended sleep for a long time.

Then, Laurent moved himself slowly towards the young woman. He put forward his lips and kissed her feet and her ankle. That skin, that white limb that he kissed, seemed to burn his mouth. The sour smell from the earth and the light perfume from Therese mixed and penetrated into him, firing his blood and straining his nerves. For a month, he had lived in continence. His march on the road to Saint-Ouen in the sun had kindled in him the flames of fire again. Now that he was there, in a secluded spot, in the midst of a voluptuous shade and silence, he could not press against his heart that woman who belonged to him. The husband may perhaps awake. He was foiled by that man. That man was always an obstacle. Lying on the ground, hiding behind Therese's skirt, the lover, irritated and shuddering, planted kisses on his mistress's limb. Therese, as if dead, did not make even the slightest movement. Laurent thought that she was asleep.

His back aching, he got up, and stood against a tree. Then he saw the young woman looking at the sky with her big and shining open eyes.

Her face, resting on her arms had a dull paleness, and seemed cold and rigid. Therese was thinking. Her fixed eyes appeared to be a dark abyss in which one could see nothing but night. She did not move. She did not turn her gaze towards Laurent who was standing behind her.

Her lover contemplated her. He was almost frightened to find her motionless. and mute under his caresses. That head, covered in the folds of her dress, gave him a sort of a poignant and piercing fright. He wished to plant a kiss on those open eyes. But almost covered by the dress, there lay Camille. The poor beast, with a warped and a thin body was snoring lightly. One could perceive his open mouth under the hat that covered him. His face, slightly twisted in his sleep, made a grimace. The few red hair that covered his chin, slightly modified the paleness of his face. One could also see his thin and wrinkled neck in the middle of which stood out the Adam's apple at each snore. Camille, lying in that position, was exasperating and ignoble to Laurent.

Laurent, who was looking at him, suddenly lifted his boot. He was going to crush his face with his boot.

Therese restrained a cry. She paled and closed her eyes. She turned her head away, in order to avoid the splashing of blood.

With his raised heel in the air for a few seconds over the face of Camille who was asleep, Laurent checked himself. Then he slowly fell back a few paces. He told himself that it would be a murder of an imbecile. His broken head would set the whole police after him. He

wished to get rid of Camille in such a way that he could marry Therese afterwards. He wished to live happily after the murder, like the murderer of the merchant whose story old Michaud had related.

He went to the river bank. He vacantly regarded the water flowing. Then, suddenly, he returned to the copsewood. He had just thought out a plan of murder that was easy and without danger.

He woke Camille by tickling him in the nose with a straw. Camille sneezed, got up and found the joke interesting. He liked Laurent for his tricks that made him laugh. Then he roused his wife who kept her eyes shut. When Therese had dressed and shaken off the dry leaves from her skirt, the three picknickers left the clearing, breaking the small branches before them.

They emerged from the islet. They came out by the paths which were full of holiday makers. Between the hedges ran the girls in transparent dresses. A party passed them in the boats singing. The files of bourgeois couples, old people clerks with their wives, moved slowly along the river. Every path seemed to be a busy and a noisy street. The sun alone was quiet. It was going down towards the horizon, making the trees rosy, and the paths white with immense rays. The air became slightly fresh and piercing.

Camille did not now give his arm to Therese. He was talking to Laurent. He laughed at the tricks of his friend who jumped over the ditches or the big stones. The young woman, on the other side of the road, advanced slowly with

her head hanging, and avoiding the bushes now and then. When she lagged behind, she stopped and regarded from behind her lower and her husband.

"Well, are you not hungry?" shouted Camille.

"Yes," replied she.

"Then, hurry up."

Therese was not hungry. She was only tired and uneasy. She did not like Laurent's plans. Her legs trembled under her in anxiety.

The three people returned to the river and looked for a suitable restaurant. They selected a sort of a wooden terrace in a cheap eating house, which stank of greese and wine.

The house was full of cries, the songs and the noise made by pots. In every cabinet, in every room, there were people who talked loudly, and the thin partitions produced a vibration which echoed all that noise. The youths, while ascending the staircase, shook it.

Above, on the terrace, the air from the river drove before it the smells of burnt meat. Therese, leaning against the Balustrade, regarded the quay on the right and on the left. There extended two lines of tea shops and shanties of the fair under the vaults. Between the leaves, one could perceive the white table cloths, the black overcoats, and the shining skirts of the ladies. The men came and went bare headed, running and laughing. And with the shrill noise of the crowd were mixed the lamentations of the musical organs of Barbarie. The atmosphere was full of cooking odours and dust.

Below Therese, the girls from the Latin Quarter danced and sang a tipsy ditty on the carpet formed by the stale grass. Their hats hanging on their shoulders, their hair untied, they held one another by the hand and played like little children. They started a string of music in a lively voice. Their cheeks were pale and a few rosy spots were marked on them, showing that they had been battered by brutal kisses. In their big, impure eyes there was expectancy. The students, smoking white earthen pipes, turned and looked at them, throwing at them a few indecent jokes.

And there, beyond the Seine, the evening set in. A bluish and vague air covered the trees with a transparent vapour.

"Well," Laurent cried, bending over the railing, "Boy! What about dinner."

Then as if changing his mind, "say! Camille," he added, "are we going to have an outing on the river before sitting at the table? They will take sometime to fry the fowl. We shall be bored waiting for it."

"As you wish," nonchalantly replied Camille, "but Therese is hungry."

"No, no, I can wait," hurriedly added the young woman whom Laurent regarded with fixed eyes."

All the three descended again. In passing before the counter, they reserved a table for themselves. They ordered the food, saying that they would return in an hour. As the shopkeepers had the boats to let, they took one. Laurent selected a thin boat whose lightness frightened Camille.

"Devil!" he said, "it cannot be rowed from within. One should make a grand plunge in it."

The truth was that the clerk was badly afraid of water. At Vernon, the sickly condition of his childhood did not permit him to go and row in the Seine. While all his companions at school ran and threw themselves in the river, he was in bed, sheltered under two warm covers. Laurent was an intrepid swimmer, and an untiring rower. Camille had retained his fear of deep waters which children and women generally have. He tried the boat with his feet, as it to make himself sure that it was solid.

"Well, enter now," Laurent cried to him laughing, "you are always trembling."

Camille set his foot on the boat and staggered to a seat at the back. When he found the planks under him he felt more easy. To appear courageous he cut jokes.

Therese was sitting on the river bank, grave and motionless, by the side of her lover holding the rope. Laurent lowered his head and in a low voice said rapidly.

"Take care," he murmured, "I am going to throw him into the water. Obey me. I shall be responsible for everything."

The young woman became very pale. She remained as if she was nailed to the ground. She became red, and her eyes opened widely.

"Come into the boat," murmured Laurent.

She did not move. A terrible battle was going on within her. She tried to control herself with all her force, for she was about to burst out in sobs and to fall on the ground.

"Ah ! Ah !" cried Camille, "Laurent, look at Therese. It is she who is afraid. She will not come. She will not come."

He was sitting on the back bench with his back against the boards of the boat and appeared boastful. Therese regarded him strangely. The jokes of the poor man were like a whip which lashed her. Suddenly she jumped into the boat. She took the front seat. Laurent took the oars. The boat left the banks, drifting slowly towards the islands.

Twilight fell. The trees were covered by darkness and the waters became black. In the river, there was a long silvery trail behind them. The boat was now in the middle of the river. All the noise from the banks became faint there. The songs and the cries arrived there with a dullness. The smells of burning meat or the dust could not reach them there. The air became fresh.

Laurent ceased rowing and let the boat be carried by the current of the river.

In front of them lay the rose coloured islands. The two banks of the river looked like two brown ribbons that joined in the horizon. The sky and the water both seemed to be formed of the same white stuff. Nothing can be more peaceful than an autumn twilight. The rays of the sun paled in the freshening air. The trees shed their old leaves, the countryside burnt a strong sun during the summer, felt the death coming to it with the first breath of cold air. The night gradually began to descend on them with its shroud of darkness.

The party kept silent. Seated in the boat that ran with the current, they looked at the last rays of light now leaving the tree-tops. They were approaching the islands. The red stone masses became dark now. The whole scene was now simplified by the twilight. The Seine, the sky, the islands, the river banks they were all disappearing in a sort of a milky mist.

Camille, who was lying flat on his stomach, his head raised above the water, dipped his hands in the water.

"The deuce ! How cold it is," he cried, "it will do no good to dip one's head in this water."

Laurent did not reply. He looked at the two banks of the river for a second with some anxiety. With his lips tightened, and his big hands on the knees, he advanced. Therese, red, motionless, her head a little turned away, waited.

The boat entered a small branch of the river between two islands in a narrow and dark spot. They heard behind one of the islands the distant sound of a boatman singing. Nobody was visible on the river for a long distance.

Then Laurent got up and caught hold of Camille round the waist. The latter began to laugh.

"Oh no. You will tickle me," he said, "no more jokes here. Look. Stop it. You are going to drop me !"

Laurent lifted him with a jerk. Camille turned his head about and saw a cruel look on the face of his friend. He was greatly agitated. He could not understand it. A vague fear

caught him. He wished to shout, but felt a rough hand on his throat. With the instinct of an animal that is on the defence, he tried to stand on his knees, holding fast to the planks of the boat. He fought like this for a few seconds.

"Therese ! Therese !" he appealed to her in a choking and whistling voice.

The young woman looked up, holding on to the boat that was dancing on the river. She could not close her eyes, which were fixed at the horrible spectacle of the struggle. She was rigid, mute.

"Therese ! Therese !" again appealed the unfortunate man who was in a death rattle.

At that last appeal, Therese broke down in sobs. Her nerves could not stand the strain. She collapsed in the boat, and fainted there.

Laurent shook Camille again and again, holding his throat by one hand. He lifted him from the boat and held him in the air with his other hand, as if he was only a child. As he lowered his head and thus exposed the neck, his poor victim, mad with rage and fear, twisted round and plunged his teeth in it. As the murderer gave a cry and threw Camille into the river, the latter's teeth carried with them a piece of his neck.

Camille fell with a thud. He came up once or twice to the surface shouting for help hoarsely.

Laurent did not lose a second. He turned the collar of his shirt to hide his wound. Then he lifted Therese who had fainted, and upset the boat with one kick. He then jumped into the

water, holding his mistress. He supported her in the water and cried for help in a lamentable voice.

The boatmen, whom they had heard singing behind the island, arrived on the spot. They knew that some accident had taken place. They carried out the rescue of Therese, whom they placed on a bench in their boat, and Laurent, who looked despairing at the death of his friend. He again jumped into the water to look for Camille at a spot where he could not be. He came back, weeping, and pulling his hair in grief. The boatmen consoled him.

"It is my fault," he cried, "I should not have allowed that poor child to dance and move about as he did. In a moment, all the three of us found ourselves on the same side of the boat, and the boat capsized. While falling, he cried to me to save his wife..."

As often happens on such occasions, some of the boatmen declared that they had witnessed the accident.

"We saw you," they said, "also! Devil! What a flimsy boat!" Ah! The poor young woman! She is going to have a nice reawakening!"

They took up their oars, righted the boat and conducted Laurent and Therese to the restaurant where dinner awaited them. All Saint-Ouen knew about the accident in a few minutes. The boatmen described it as if they were the eye-witnesses. A crowd, moved by pity, gathered before the shop.

The shop-keeper and his wife were good people who gave dry clothes to the victims of

the accident. When Therese came to, she had an attack of nerves. She broke into heart-rending cries. It was necessary to put her to bed. Nature helped her in the sinister tragedy that she had played.

When the young woman became calmer, Laurent confided her to the care of the wife of the proprietor of the restaurant. He wished to return to Paris alone, in order to break the frightful news to Madam Raquin, with as much caution as possible. The truth was that he was afraid of the nervous break down of Therese. He preferred to let her have time to think out and learn her role.

It was the boatmen who ate the dinner that Camille had ordered !

XII

Sitting in the dark corner of a hackney carriage that was taking him to Paris, Laurent completed his plans. He was almost certain that he would never be suspected. A secret joy filled him, the joy of having accomplished the crime. Arriving at the Clichy Gate, he took a taxi and drove to the house of old Michaud in the Rue de Seine. It was nine o'clock in the evening.

The old commissioner of Police, in company with Olivier and Suzanne, was at his dinner table. Laurent went there to seek protection, in the event of being suspected, and to escape the unpleasant task of breaking the frightful news to Madam Raquin. That proceeding filled him with strange loathsomeness. He was given to so much despair that he was afraid that he may not be able to play his role with enough tears. Then the mother's anguish weighed heavily on him, for at heart he did care a little for her.

As Michaud saw him enter with rough clothes on, too short for him, he threw a questioning glance to him. Laurent described the accident in a broken voice, as if entirely overwhelmed with sorrow and fatigue.

"I have come to you," he said finishing his account, "for I do not know what to do with the two poor women whom fate has treated so cruelly. I had not the courage to go alone to the mother. I pray you to accompany me."

As he was speaking, Olivier regarded him with a fixed gaze that seemed to frighten him. The murderer had gone to those gentlemen of the police, with his head lowered, in an audacity that should save him. But he could not prevent himself from shivering under their piercing gaze. He saw suspicion, whereas they were only stupefied and were pitying. Suzanne, weak and pale, was about to faint. Olivier, whom the idea of death frightened, and who was, besides, perfectly calm, made a painful grimace, while by habit, scrutinising Laurent's face, without in the least suspecting the truth. Michaud gave out the exclamations of fear, of pity and of astonishment. He sat in the chair clutching his hands, his eyes raised to the ceiling.

"Oh ! My God !" He said in a broken voice, "Oh ! My God ! The frightful thing ! He goes out of his house, and dies all of a sudden.... That is horrible. And that poor Madam Raquin, that poor mother, what shall we tell her ? Certainly, you have done well to come here. We shall accompany you."

He rose, and turned, shuffling in the room to look for his cane and his hat. While so engaged, he was repeating to Laurent the details of the catastrophe, uttering exclamations again and again at each phrase.

All the four of them went. At the entrance of the passage of the Pont-Neuf Michaud stopped Laurent.

"Don't come". He told him, "Your presence without Camille will be a brutal avowal of the tragedy which we must avoid. The unfortunate

mother will suspect the tragedy that we dare not announce to her so soon. Wait for us here."

This arrangement relieved the murderer, who shuddered at the thought of entering the shop. He became calm, and began to walk up and down the pavement. Momentarily, he forgot the details of the event that had taken place. He looked at the shops, whistled between his teeth, and turned to look at the women who jostled him. He remained in the passage thus for more than half an hour, regaining his courage.

He had not eaten since that morning. He was hungry. He entered a confectioner's shop and stuffed himself with cakes.

In the shop a distressing scene took place. In spite of the precautions, and the calm and friendly words of Michaud, Madam Raquin knew in an instant that a misfortune had overtaken his son. Then she was thrown into utter despair by the violence of the tears and cries which overwhelmed her old friend. When she learnt the truth, her suffering was tragic. Her whole body was shaken by sobs. She became mad with pain and anguish. She was almost suffocated. She gave out, now and then, a cry of great pain. She would have fallen to the ground if Suzanne had not supported her, herself weeping with her pale face lifted towards the old woman. Olivier and his father remained standing, mute and nervous, their heads turned away, deeply touched by that painful spectacle.

And the poor mother saw her son rolling in the stormy waters of the Seine, his body red and horribly swollen. At the same time, she

saw him as a small child in his cradle, when she defended him against death, leaning over him. She had saved him for this world more than ten times. She loved him with all her love for the last thirty years. And now he died, away from her! He died so suddenly, in cold and dirty water, like a dog! She thought of the warm covers in which she used to envelop him. What cares! What a childhood! All those cares, all the cajoleries and the effusions of tenderness were, after all, to see him drowned so miserably one day! At this thought Madam Raquin felt her heart bursting. She hoped she would die, choked with despair.

The old Michaud hastened to go out. He left Suzanne near the Mercer, and with Olivier went out to find Laurent, so that they could return at once to Saint-Ouen.

They hardly spoke on the way. Every one, forced to his own corner, kept to his seat in the carriage that jolted on the stone flags. They remained quiet and motionless in the darkness that filled the carriage. Sometimes, the light of the street lamp entering the carriage lighted their faces. The sinister tragedy which had united them now had produced a tragic effect on them.

When they arrived finally at the restaurant on the bank of the river, they found Therese asleep. Her head and her hands were burning. The traitor, Laurent, told them that she had a high fever. The truth was that Therese felt herself weak and undecided. Fearing, that in a crisis she may confess everything, she pretended illness. She remained silent. She kept her lips

and eyes tightly shut, not wishing to see any one, and refusing to speak. With a blanket over her gown, and her head resting on a pillow, she looked very small. She heard with anxiety everything they said around her. Before her eyes, there was the scene of Camille and Laurent fighting in the boat. She saw her husband lying at the bottom of the muddy water, pale and horribly swollen. That inexorable scene made her feverish.

The old Mr. Michaud tried to speak to her, tried to console her. She made an impatient movement. She turned and began to sob afresh.

"Let her alone, Sir," said the restaurant-keeper, "She shudders at the least noise. She needs rest."

Below, in the common hall, there was a policeman taking the statements about the accident. Michaud and his son went there followed by Laurent. When Olivier made himself known as an officer of the Police Prefecture, everything was finished in ten minutes. The boatmen were there. They related the accident in its minutest detail, describing how the three people in the boat fell into the water. They declared that they saw the whole thing. If Michaud and his son had even the least suspicion, that suspicion vanished before such evidence. But they had never doubted the truth of Laurent's statement. On the contrary, they presented Laurent to the policeman as the best friend of the victim. They also gave in writing that the young man threw himself into the water to save Camille. The following morning, the newspapers came out with the fullest details

of the accident. The poor mother, the unconsolable widow, the noble and courageous friend; they missed nothing in their account. These newspapers were later filed in the various offices.

When the written statement was completed, Laurent felt a sort of a warm joy which filled his body, and opened a new life for him. Since the moment his victim had pierced his teeth into his neck, he had acted mechanically, according to the plans prepared long before. An instinct of self-preservation alone goaded him on. Now, with the certainty of impunity, his blood began to flow normally. The police had passed by his crime, they saw nothing, they had been duped, they had acquitted him! He was saved. A thrill of joy ran all along his body at that thought. His mind and his limbs regained their suppleness. But he continued playing the role of a disconsolate friend with studiousness and steadiness. At heart, he had the satisfaction of a brute. He thought of Therese who was lying in the room above.

"We cannot leave that unfortunate woman here." He said to Michaud. "Perhaps she is threatened with some serious malady. It is absolutely necessary to take her to Paris. Come, we shall persuade her to go with us."

In the room above, he requested, he entreated Therese to get up, and to let them take her to the passage of the Pont-Neuf. When the young woman heard his voice, she started, opened her eyes wide open and regarded him. She was stupefied, frightened. She straightened herself painfully. The men went out, leaving her alone with the wife of the restaurant keeper. When she was

dressed, she descended staggering and entered into the carriage, supported by Olivier.

The journey was done silently. Laurent, with perfect impudence and audacity, slipped his hand under her skirt and took her fingers. He was seated opposite to her, in darkness. He could not see her face which was buried in her breasts. When he took her hand, he held it there forcibly until they reached Rue Mazarine. He felt that hand trembling, but she did not draw it back. Their hands burned, and the moist palms stuck to each other. Their fingers held tightly, crushed themselves at every move. Laurent and Therese felt that their heart's blood was entering each other's body through their united finger tips. Those tips became the nucleus where their life started. In the middle of that night, and in the heart-rending silence, the violent hand-shake that they were exchanging, was like the crushing blow that was aimed at Camille's head to keep him under water !

When the carriage stopped, Michaud and his son were the first to get down. Laurent bent towards his mistress and said quietly, "Take courage, Therese," he murmured, "We have long to wait. Remember this."

The young woman had not yet spoken. She opened her lips for the first time after the death of her husband.

"Oh ! I shall remember myself," she said in a slow and shaking voice.

Olivier offered her his hand, inviting her to get down. Laurent went upto the shop this time. Madam Raquin was lying a prey to her violent delirium. Therese went to her bed, and

Suzanne had hardly the time to undress her. Re-assured, that everything was going on as arranged and desired, Laurent retired. He gained slowly his rooms in the Rue-Saint-Victor.

It was about midnight. A fresh and cold air was blowing from the silent streets. The youngman heard nothing but the sound of his own steps on the pavement. The cold air bit his skin, the silence and the darkness frightened him. He began to run.

Finally, he was free from his crime. He had killed Camille. That was an affair of which they would talk no more. He was going to live peacefully, awaiting the occasion when he could take possession of Therese. The idea of murder had often made him uneasy. Now that the murder had been accomplished, he felt himself light at heart. He breathed freely. He had fought against the indecision and the fear that had assailed him.

At heart, he was uneasy. The fatigue made him go to bed. He slept soundly. During his sleep, nervous fear showed itself on his face.

XIII

The following morning Laurent awoke, fresh and cheerful. He had slept well. The cold air entering through the window had stimulated his sluggish blood. He recalled to himself every detail of the scenes of the last evening. But for the sharp pain which burnt his neck, he could have believed that he had been in bed all the time after ten o'clock of the night.

The bite of Camille was like a red hot iron placed on his skin. When his thought was drawn to the pain which that wound gave him, he suffered cruelly. It appeared to him that a dozen sharp needles were slowly being pierced into his flesh.

He cut open his shirt collar and looked at the wound, in a cheap mirror that was hanging by the wall. The wound made a red hole as large as a twopenny coin. The skin having been torn away, the flesh appeared rosy, with a black spot. The blood had run to the shoulders and was coming off now in small bits. On the white neck, the bite appeared to be of a dull brown colour. It was to the right, below the ears. Laurent, with his back bent, and his neck extended, looked at it. The greenish mirror made his face look atrocious.

He washed himself with plenty of water, satisfied by his examination of the wound that it will be healed in a few days. Then, he dressed himself and went to his office calmly as usual. He recounted the accident there in a voice full of emotions. As his colleagues had

already read the whole account in the papers, he became a real hero. For full one week, the employees of the Orleans Railway had nothing else to discuss, except this topic. They were proud enough that one of them had been drowned. Grivet was never tired of criticising the folly of venturing in the middle of the river, when one could easily observe the running water just from the bridge.

Laurent was secretly uneasy. The death of Camille had not yet been proved officially. Therese's husband was dead, but the murderer wished to get back the dead body, in order that a formal document, proving the death, could be drawn up. The day following the accident, they searched for the dead body of the drowned without success. They thought that he had been pushed into some hole under the rocks of the island. The divers were actively busy in the river in order to earn the prize offered.

Laurent set himself to the task of visiting the Morgue every morning, while going to the office. He had determined to do this work himself. In spite of the repugnance, in spite of the shivering that he often experienced, he visited it regularly for more than a week, examining carefully the faces of all the drowned bodies exposed on the boards.

As he entered, a sickening odour, the odour of rotten flesh, assailed him. He felt a cold shivering run up and down his body. The moisture of the walls appeared to make his dress heavy, which weighed more heavily on the shoulders. He went straight to the glass-panes which separated the spectators from the dead bodies.

He put his pale face against the glass. He looked. Before him spread the rows of grey stones. Here and there, on the stones, the naked dead bodies were laid out, green or yellow, white or red. Certain dead bodies retained the natural colour of their flesh in the rigidity of death. Others were merely a mass of bleeding and rotten flesh. On the floor were hung against the wall the lamentable rags of their clothing, the shirts and pantaloons, which made grimaces on the naked plaster of the wall. Laurent saw at first only a mass of pale stones and walls, varied only by the red and the black colour of the clothes and of the corpses. He also heard the noise of running water.

By and by, he distinguished the dead bodies. Then, he went from one to the other. The dead bodies of the drowned alone interested him. When there were several dead bodies, swollen and made blue by the water, he looked at them eagerly, waiting to recognize Camille. Often the flesh on the face came off in bits, the bones had pierced the skin softened by water. The faces looked like a flabby pulp. Laurent hesitated. He tried to look for the thinness of his victim. But all the dead bodies of the drowned are ugly to look at. He saw the enormous bellies, the puffed up thighs, the large and round arms. He could see no more. He remained shuddering in front of the greenish rags of clothing which appeared to mock him with their horrible grimaces.

One day he was really frightened. He had been observing the dead body of a drowned person, short in size, atrociously disfigured. The flesh of the drowned person had become so soft

and broken that running water was carrying it away bit by bit. The light that was falling on the face exposed a hole on the left that had been a nostril. Suddenly the nose flattened, the lips parted and showed the white teeth. The dead body appeared to be grinning.

Every time when he believed to have recognized Camille, Laurent felt a burning pain at his heart. He ardently desired to find the dead body of his victim, but a weakness took hold of him as soon as he imagined that the dead body was before him. Those visits to the Morgue gave him nightmares, shivers that made him gasp from breath. He shook off his fears. He treated himself like a child. He wished to be strong. But in spite of him, his body revolted. From the moment he found himself in the midst of moist and sickening odour of the hall, the disgust and fright filled him.

When he saw no dead bodies of the drowned persons on the board, he breathed more freely. His repugnance was the least at that time. He then became a simple inquisitive person who took a strange pleasure in looking at the dead bodies, in their bizarre and grotesque attitudes. That spectacle amused him, specially if the body happened to be of a woman. The nudity of the body exposed brutally on the board, marked with blood, attracted him. Once he saw a dead body of a young woman of twenty years, a woman of loose morals, stout and strong who seemed to be asleep on the board. Her fresh body was of a delicate whiteness. She seemed to smile with her head turned to one side, and her breasts exposed provokingly. One could say that there was a courtesan who was

making merry, if one did not see the black mark round her neck. That was a woman who had hanged herself, having despaired of love.

Laurent looked at her for a long time, his eyes travelling all over her body. He seemed to be absorbed in a sort of a timid desire.

Every morning, so long as he was there, he saw the public coming and going.

The Morgue is an entertainment which is free to everybody, rich or poor. The gates are open, enter whosoever will. There are a few amateurs who make a round of the Morgue, so that they may not miss even a single representation of death. If the boards are empty, people are disappointed, robbed of their pleasure, and leave murmuring between their teeth. When the boards are over-crowded, when there is a good exhibition of human flesh, the visitors derive cheap pleasures, which frighten them, or which encourage them to cut jokes as if in a theatre. They retire satisfied, declaring that the Morgue is thriving that day.

Laurent knew well the people who visited the Morgue. These people were an incongruous lot who pitied and chuckled in common. The labourers went there while on the way to their work, with their food and tools under their arm. They found death rather queer. One could find among them the wits of the studios who made people laugh by their remarks on the grimaces of the dead bodies. They recalled the fire at the charcoal shop, the hangings, the assassinations, the drownings. The dead bodies which were cut or bruised particularly excited their scoffing spirit, and in a slightly trembling

voice they uttered the comic phrases which broke the silence of the hall. Then, there were the petty landlords. They were generally old people who had no work to do and therefore employed themselves in looking at the dead bodies. Women went there in large numbers also. There were the young working girls, all excited with their white dress, and their clean skirts. They went over from one end to the other of the Morgue, excitedly and attentively, as if they were before the shop windows displaying some novelty. There were also some women of loose morals, stupid, lamentable, trailing their silk dress nonchalantly.

One day, Laurent saw one of these latter who stood a few paces away from him, wiping her face with a muslin handkerchief. She wore a beautiful grey silk dress, with a gown over it. A veil covered her face. Her gloved hands appeared very small and very fine. All around her there was a sweet smell of *voilette*. She was looking at a dead body. On the board, a few paces away, lay the dead body of a handsome person. He was a mason who was killed, as he fell down from the scaffolding. He had broken his ribs. His muscles were thick and short. His skin was white. The death had turned him into marble. The woman examined him in an absorbing manner. She raised one corner of her veil, looked again, and then went out.

Occasionally, there entered some boys, about twelve or thirteen years of age. They ran here and there in the Morgue, stopping only in front of the dead bodies of the women. They pointed shamelessly at the naked breasts. They elbowed

each other ; they made indecent remarks. They had their first lessons of vice in the school of death. It is in the Morgue that the urchins have their first mistresses.

At the end of a week, Laurent was disheartened. At night, he dreamt of the dead bodies that he had seen during the day. That suffering, that disgust of every day, troubled him to such a point that he decided to pay only two visits more to the Morgue. The next day when he entered the Morgue he received a sudden shock. In front of him, on a board, he found Camille spread on his back, his head raised and his eyes half closed.

The murderer slowly approached the glass partition, as if he was being drawn to it. He could not detach his eyes from his victim. He did not suffer. He simply felt a cold feeling in his heart which tingled his whole body. He believed that he was shivering. He remained motionless for about five minutes. He was lost in an unconscious contemplation of those horrible memories. All the scenes of the drama were before his eyes.

Camille was ignoble. He had remained in the water for fifteen days. His face appeared firm and rigid. The lines on it were still preserved. Only the skin had changed colour to a yellowish muddy tint. His head, which was small, bony and slightly swollen, seemed to grimace. It was slightly bent with the hair sticking to the temples, the eyelids raised, exposing the pale eyeballs. The lips drawn slightly to one side of the mouth had an atrocious look. At the end of a long, black passage appeared the teeth

in their whiteness. That head, though tanned and stretched, still maintained a human resemblance. It showed even then the fear of something terrible. The body was completely decomposed. It had suffered horribly. The arms had loosened, the collar bone had pierced the skin at the shoulders. On the chest, the ribs looked like black bands. The left side was burst open and exposed a dull red flesh. The whole of the trunk was rotten. The legs remained a little more firm, sticking to the filthy body. The feet had fallen.

Laurent looked at Camille. He had never seen a more terrifying spectacle of a drowned man. The dead body had, besides, the air of scantiness and a meagre size. It made a very little heap. One could say that it was the body of a poorly paid clerk, getting only twelve hundred francs, sickly, whose mother had brought him up on all sorts of drugs. That poor body which had been preserved by his mother under the protection of warm covering, now lay in the shivering cold of the Morgue.

When Laurent could, at last, check his curiosity which kept him motionless and gaping, he left the Morgue. He began to walk rapidly along the river, repeating to himself all the time, "That is what I have done. It is horrible." It seemed to him that a putrid odour pursued him, the odour which the decaying dead body had been giving out.

He went to search for old Michaud to tell him to accompany him to the Morgue, in order to identify Camille. The formalities were completed.

The dead body of the drowned was buried. A formal document, proving death, was signed. Henceforth, Laurent became quiet, and tried to forget his crime and the angry and painful scenes which had followed the murder.

XIV

The shop remained closed for three days. When it was reopened it appeared to be darker and more damp than ever. The goods had the brown appearance covered with dust, and seemed to be mourning in company with the whole house. Everything in the shop window was dirty and neglected. Behind the linen caps hanging on the rusty curtain rods one could see the pale and dull face of Therese. That face had now more terror, was more expressionless and more sinister than ever before.

In the passage, all the merchants sympathised with her. The jeweller selling imitation jewellery pointed out to every client the young widow, as if she was an interesting and lamentable curiosity.

For three days, Madam Raquin and Therese remained in their beds without speaking to each other and without even seeing each other. The old mercer, seated on her bed, supported by pillows, looked vacantly before her. The death of her son had affected her reason. She had been completely prostrated. For hours together she remained like this, absorbed in her despair. Then she gave out a long cry. She wept and cried as if in a delirium. Therese, in the adjoining room, appeared to be asleep. She had turned her face towards the wall and had drawn a sheet over her face. She remained lying in this way silently. Not even a sob seemed to move the sheet with which she covered herself. She hid rigidly in the darkness of her mind whatever

thoughts she had. Suzanne, who attended the two women, moved softly from one room to the other. She watched carefully over the two beds, but did not succeed in inducing Therese to turn her head from the wall. Neither did she succeed in consoling Madam Raquin whose tears were running continuously.

On the third day Therese pushed back her sheets and sat down on the bed, suddenly, with a sort of a feverish decision. She loosened her hair, scattering them on her temples and remained like this for a second. She supported her head in her hands; her eyes were fixed, and still gazing vacantly. Then, she jumped out of the bed. Her limbs were shivering with fever. Large patches of white marked her skin, where there seemed to be no blood. She had aged.

Suzanne who entered the room at that moment, was taken by surprise to see her out of bed. She consoled her in a placid, but halting tone, and advised her to rest a little more. Therese did not seem to hear. She began to dress. When she was dressed, she regarded herself in a mirror, rubbed her eyes, passed her hands over her face as if to efface something. Then, without a word she rapidly crossed the Dining-room and entered into Madam Raquin's room.

The old mercer was at that moment looking calm. When Therese entered, she turned and regarded the young widow who now stood before her mute and oppressed. The two women contemplated each other for a few seconds, the niece with an anxiety that grew, the aunt with the painful recollection of the past. Still moody, Madam Raquin held out her trembling arms and

embraced Therese crying, "My poor child, my poor Camille."

She cried and her tears dried themselves on the burning skin of the widow who wiped her dry eyes in a fold of her dress. Therese remained thus, leaving the old mother-in-law to dry up her tears. Since the murder, she had been afraid of the first meeting. She had remained in bed, in order to postpone this meeting, in order to think out at leisure the terrible role that she had to play.

When she saw Madam Raquin calmed down a little. She went round her, and advised her to get up and to come to the shop. The old mercer was almost in her childhood. The sudden appearance of her niece had revived her to such an extent that she felt conscious of the things and beings that surrounded her. She offered her thanks to Suzanne for her care. She talked affably, no longer delirious, full of a sadness which now and then choked her voice. She saw, with tears in her eyes, Therese walking about. Then she called her and embraced her again, sobbing, and said that she had nobody else in the world except her.

That evening she agreed to wash and try to eat something. Therese could see what a terrible shock her aunt had received. The limbs of the poor old woman were cramped. She needed a stick to support her, to drag herself to the Dining-room. There, it appeared to her that the walls were moving all around her.

The following day, she decided, however, to open the shop. She feared that she would go

mad if she kept herself to her room. She descended the wooden stairs heavily, placing both her feet on every step, and went to sit behind the counter. From that day on, she remained there serenely as if nailed to her seat.

By her side Therese sat and thought. The shop resumed its dark and calm air.

XV

Laurent came often in the evening every second or third day. He remained in the shop talking to Madam Raquin for a while. Then he went away without looking at Therese in the face. The old mercer considered him as a saviour of her niece, as a noble heart who had done everything to help her son. She received him with her expected generosity.

One Thursday evening, Laurent was there when the old Michaud and Grivet entered. The clock struck eight. He and the old police commissioner had each counted on his part that they would be able to resume their usual activity of Thursday evenings, without making themselves obtrusive. They had gone to the shop, therefore, as if led by the same force. Olivier and Suzanne had followed.

They ascended to the Dining-room. Madam Raquin who heard nothing, went to light the lamp and to make the tea. When everybody was seated at the table, when the dominoes were emptied on it, the poor mother, suddenly reminded of the past days, looked at her guests and broke out into sobs. There was one chair there that was empty, the chair her son used to occupy. This despair penalised everybody. They were annoyed. All faces looked blank. These people, not having the least recollection of the living Camille in their heart, seemed to be vexed.

"See, dear Madam," cried the old Michaud with a little impatience.

"You should not despair like this. You will make yourself ill."

"We are all mortals," affirmed Grivet.

"Your crying will not bring back your son," Olivier declared sententiously.

"I pray you," murmured Suzanne, "Do not cause us to remember the painful event."

And as Madam Raquin sobbed still more loudly, not being able to check her tears,

"Come, come," said Michaud, "Have a little courage. You know very well that we come here in order to distract you. What a pity. Do not sadden us. Try to forget We shall play with two sons on each side. Eh, what do you say?"

The mercer restrained her tears with a supreme effort. Perhaps she had become conscious of the happy presence of her guests. She dried her eyes, though still shaking. The dominoes shook in her poor hands, and the tears remaining under the eyelids prevented her to see clearly.

They played.

Laurent and Therese took part in that scene, grave and unmoved. The young people were happy to see the return of Thursday evenings. They had looked for them ardently, knowing full well that they needed those reunions, in order to attain their goal. Then, without asking himself the reason, Laurent felt more at ease in the midst of that company that he knew. He had now the courage to regard Therese in the face.

The young woman dressed in black, pale and collected, appeared to him to possess a beauty that he had so far ignored. He was happy to encounter her eyes again which met his own openly and courageously. Therese was now his for ever, body and soul!

XVI

Fifteen months passed in this way. The pain of the first few days gradually became less. Everyday brought a little more tranquillity, a little more peace. Life resumed its usual course, with apathy and weariness in the beginning. It had that monotony and stupor which usually follow such sad events. In the beginning, Laurent and Therese gradually slipped into that new existence which had transformed them. Secretly, and with extreme delicacy, they marked every phase of their new life.

As in the past, Laurent now came to the shop every evening. But he did not dine there. He did not pass the whole evening there. He arrived at half-past nine and went away as soon as the shop was closed. One could say that he came to the shop to perform a duty to help the two women in closing the shop. If he failed to appear on any evening, to do this duty, next day he apologized in all humility, like a servant. On Thursdays, he helped Madam Raquin to light the fire and to do the honours of the house. He was very attentive to the old woman which pleased her.

Therese regarded him moving about quietly all around her. The pallor of her face had returned. She carried herself better. She was more calm, and had more smiles. Hardly, if ever, did her lips twitch nervously, which was a sign of pain and fear.

The two lovers did not attempt to see each other particularly. In fact they never fixed

any rendezvous, never demanded kisses. The murder had cooled, for the moment, the heat of their love. The mad and insatiable desires which they could never quench when they crushed themselves in each other's arms, seemed to have been gratified in killing Camille. The crime appeared to them to have been such a painful joy that they looked upon their embraces as sickening and disgusting.

They had, however, every facility to enjoy that free love the dream of which had forced them into that assassination. Madam Raquin, weak and stupefied, was no obstacle at all. They had the whole house to themselves. They could go out, wherever their fancy wanted to. But their love was no more demanding. Their appetites had left them. They remained there, talking calmly, regarding each other without excitement or without thrill. They seemed to have forgot the mad embraces which had set their flesh on fire and which had cracked their bones. They even avoided to be alone, for in their privacy they had hardly anything to say to each other. They were both afraid of appearing cold to each other. When they shook hands, they felt a sort of an uneasiness which appeared when their skins touched.

Besides, they were afraid to explain to each other this indifference and fear of each other. They believed that their attitude was due to caution. According to them, the calmness and the abstinence which they practised was the greatest wisdom. They pretended that it was their wish that the desires of their body and their heart should remain asleep. Besides, they also thought that their repugnance of each other

was due to their fear of heavy punishment. Sometimes, they forced themselves to hope. They tried to take up the burning dreams of the past. But they were astonished to find their imagination vacant. Then, they tried to cling to the idea of their coming marriage. Having attained their object, having no more fear, their passion will reappear, and they will taste the joys of which they had dreamed. That hope satisfied them and prevented them from feeling despair. They persuaded themselves that they would love each other as in the past. The hour of their perfect happiness would arrive and would join them for ever.

Therese was never so calm as now. She became even better. All the strain to which her body had been put seemed to be relaxed.

At night, alone in her bed, she was happy: She had not to put up with the lean and worthless body of Camille by her side who exasperated her and left her unsatisfied. Now she felt like a little child, a virgin under the white curtains, and peaceful in the midst of silence and darkness. Her room that was big, though a little cold with its raised floor, its dark corners, and its cloisterlike appearance, pleased her. She even liked the big wall which rose before her windows. Throughout the summer, every night she watched the grey stones of that wall, and the little bit of the star-studded sky above it. She never thought of Laurent, except when she awoke with a start, owing to a nightmare. Then, sitting on the bed, trembling, her eyes wide open with fear, she used to say to herself that she should have no nightmares, if she had a man to sleep by her side. She would think of

her lover as one thinks of a dog that guards and protects one. Her calm and fresh body was not at all thrilled at these thoughts.

During the day, in the shop, she interested herself in superfluous things. She went out alone, and no more lived that life of revolt; full of thoughts of hatred and vengeance. Reveries annoyed her now. She wanted to be active and to see things. From morning till evening, she looked at the people who passed by the passage. Their noise, that going and coming, amused her. She became curious and talkative, in one word, a woman. For, until then, she had only thought and acted like a man.

She noticed a young man, a student, who lived in a furnished hotel in the neighbourhood, and who passed by her shop several times every-day. He was a handsome boy, with a pale beauty, long hair, like those of a poet, and a moustache like that of an officer. For Therese he possessed some distinction. She was in a school-girl-like love with him for about a week. She had read love stories. She compared him with Laurent. She found the latter to be stout and clumsy. The novels she read opened for her a romantic horizon of which she was unaware until then. So far she had loved only with her blood and her nerves. Now she set herself to a Platonic love. Then, one day, the student disappeared. Doubtless, he had shifted to some other place. Therese forgot him in a few hours.

She became a member of a reading-room. She fell in love with all the heroes of the novels she read. That sudden love of the reading-room

had a great influence on her temperament. She acquired a sensitiveness which made her laugh or cry without any cause whatsoever. The calm that she had been able to establish was thus broken. She again fell back into vague reveries. Sometimes, she was disturbed by the thought of Camille. Then, she thought of Laurent with a new desire, full of fear and defiance. She was thus reduced to anguish. At one time, she sought for means to marry her lover that very instant. At another time, she thought of saving herself, of never seeing him again. The novels that had inspired her with an idea of chastity and honour were a sort of an obstacle to her desires. She remained the indomitable beast who had wished to fight the Seine while a child, and who had thrown herself violently into adultery. But she was conscious of the goodness and gentleness. She could understand the stupid face and the death like attitude of Olivier's wife. She knew that it is impossible for one to have one's husband murdered and still be happy. She did not regard herself in good light. She lived in a cruel indecision.

On his side, Laurent passed through different phases of calmness and agitation. At first he experienced a profound tranquillity. He felt relieved of an enormous weight. On occasions, he questioned himself with astonishment. He believed that he had had only a dream. He asked himself if it was really a fact that he had thrown Camille into the water, and whose body he had seen in the Morgue. The recollection of his crime surprised him strongly. Never could he believe himself to be capable of assassination. All his prudence and all his cowardice would prevent him. When he thought that a murderer can be

caught and guillotined, beads of perspiration stood on his face. Then he imagined as if he was feeling the edge of the knife. When he was so excited, he lost all control of himself and looked like a blind and obstinate beast. Then, he tried to collect himself, and, realising that he was almost at the point of fainting, he was terrified.

‘Surely, I was mad,’ he thought. “That woman must have intoxicated me with her kisses. Good God, am I a beast and a fool? I risked the guillotine with such a story. However, everything has passed off well. If I were to begin again I could not do it.”

Laurent felt depressed. He felt weak, and was more afraid and more cautious than ever before. He became fat and out of shape. Any one who had seen his flabby body, which appeared to have no bone or muscles, could never have accused him of violence or cruelty.

He resumed his old habits. For several months, he worked well in the office. In the evenings, he took his meals in a milk-shop, situated in the rue Saint-Victor, cutting his bread in small slices, chewing his food slowly, and making his food last as long as possible. Then, he turned against the wall. He smoked his pipe. They could have described him as a ‘grand old man’, with round belly. During the day, he thought of nothing. In the night, he slept well, without dreaming.

His body appeared to be dead. He did not feel the need of Therese. Whenever he thought of her, it was only as a woman whom he had to marry later in an indefinite future. He pati-

ently awaited his marriage, forgetting the woman, and dreaming of the new situation in which he may find himself then. He dreamed that he will leave the office, set up as an amateur painter, and stroll about. Dreaming thus, he reached the shop in the passage, in spite of the vague uneasiness that he experienced while entering it.

One Sunday, feeling bored and not knowing what to do, he went to visit his old friend of the college with whom he had lodged for a long time. The artist was working on a painting which he hoped to send to the Salon, and which represented a nude form lying on a little rag. A woman, who modelled, was lying in the studio, with her head thrown back and her body fully exposed. The woman sometimes laughed and raised her breasts, and at other times, stretched out her arms to relax herself. Laurent was seated opposite to her. He regarded her, while smoking and talking to his friend. His blood was heated, and his nerves were excited by the scene before him. He remained there until the evening and took the woman with him to his hotel. He kept her as his mistress for about one year. The poor girl had come to love him. In the mornings, she went out posing the whole day, and returned in the evenings regularly at the same hour. She maintained herself with the money that she earned, and thus cost not even a penny to Laurent, who did not bother as to where she went or what she did. That woman brought back equilibrium into his life. He accepted her as a useful and necessary object which kept his body in peace and health. He never knew if he really loved her. Never did

it strike him that he was faithless to Therese. He felt satisfied and happy. That is all.

In the meantime, Therese completed the period of her mourning. The young woman put on a white transparent dress, and one evening Laurent felt that she had grown younger and more beautiful. But he always felt somewhat uneasy before her. For some time past, she appeared to him feverish, full of strange caprice, bursting out into laughter, or feeling depressed without any cause whatsoever. The indecision in which he found her worried him. For he felt that he was partly responsible for her struggles and her troubles. Feeling guilty of having destroyed her peace, he used to hesitate. As for himself, he lived happily, discreetly satisfying his desires. He feared to risk the equilibrium of his life by binding himself to such a nervous woman whose passions had intoxicated him at one time. He did not like to reason out these things. He only felt them instinctively.

The first shock that he received and which disturbed his calm was the thought that he must finally marry her. Fifteen months has passed since the death of Camille. For an instant, Laurent thought not to marry Therese at all but to give her a slip, and to take to the model who satisfied him and cost him nothing. Then he told himself that he did not kill a man for nothing. He remained himself of the crime, and the terrible efforts that he had made for having Therese for himself alone. He felt that the murder would be useless and atrocious, if he did not now marry the woman. Throwing a man in the water in order to possess his widow, waiting for her for fifteen months, and then to

decide to live with a girl who exhibited her charms in every studio, looked atrocious and brought a smile to his lips. Besides, was he not joined to Therese by a tie of blood and of murder? He felt vaguely that Therese in him was crying and writhing. He belonged to her. He was afraid of her being his accomplice. It was likely that if he did not marry her, she might tell everything to the police, out of vengeance and jealousy. Such ideas filled his head. He felt feverish.

During the interval, the model left him suddenly. One Sunday, that girl did not return. Doubtless, she had found warmer and more comfortable quarters. Laurent was slightly grieved at first. He was accustomed to have a woman sleeping by his side during the nights. Suddenly, he found his life empty. A week later, his nerves revolted. He began to spend the whole evening in the shop in the passage, regarding Therese with shining eyes. The young woman, who had been thrilled by the romantic novels that she had read, languished and abandoned herself to his gaze.

After a long year's waiting and indifference, they were both thus overwhelmed with desire. One evening, while they were closing the shop, Laurent detained Therese for an instant in the passage.

"Do you wish that I should come to your room this night?" He asked her in an ardent voice.

"No, No. Wait. We must be prudent," replied the young woman in a frightened tone.

"I have waited for a long time, I believe," said Laurent, "I am tired of it. I want you."

"Therese looked at him warmly. She was burning with excitement. She appeared to be hesitating. Then she replied in a brusque voice."

"Let us marry. I shall be at your disposal, then."

XVII

Laurent walked away stiffly. Therese's consent to marriage again brought to him those bitter feelings of the past. He walked along the wharves, his hat in his hand, so that he could feel the cold air full in the face.

When he reached the rue Saint Victor, at the gate of his hotel, being alone, he was afraid to go in. A childish fear, inexplicable and unforeseen, that a man was hiding in his room, took hold of him. He had never been subject to such cowardice. He did not try to reason out the strange fear that possessed him. He entered a wine shop and remained there until midnight, drinking mechanically. He thought of Therese. He felt irritated with her. She had not agreed to receive him in her room that night. He thought that with her he would not have felt this fear.

The wine shop was being closed, and he had to be turned out. He returned to the wine merchant to ask for some matches, for the office of his hotel was on the first floor. Laurent had to pass through a long passage and to ascend a few steps before reaching his candle kept in the office. The inky darkness of that passage and the door to the staircase gave him a terrible fright. Usually, he crossed that passage quite gaily. But that evening he did not dare to ring. He said to himself that an assassin was hiding in that passage and would pounce on him suddenly as he was crossing. Finally, he rang. He lighted match and decided to enter.

The light went out. He remained motionless, breathing heavily, not daring to go forward or backward. Anxiously, he tried to light another match against the damp wall with a shaking hand. He imagined that he heard a sound, the sound of falling feet. The match broke in his hand. Then, he succeeded in lighting one. His fears were redoubled, as the flame grew up very slowly. In the pale, bluish light of the sulphur, which appeared to be vacillating, he imagined he saw monstrous figures. Then the light became clearer. Laurent felt some relief and moved forward with some caution, taking care of the light. He ran up the steps which separated him from the office of the hotel. He felt he was saved when he got his candle. He ascended the other steps more slowly and calmly, holding the candle before him to light every corner which he had to pass. The shadows that come and go when you ascend a staircase with a candle, filled him with a vague uneasiness, making him to straighten himself, or to draw himself away suddenly.

When he reached the top, he opened his door and quickly shut himself up. His first care was to look under his bed and go over every nook and corner of the room to see if anybody was hiding. He shut the window, fearing that some one may enter through it. When he had taken all these precautions, he felt more calm. He took off his clothes, and was surprised at his cowardice. He smiled at his childishness. He had never been frightened. He could not explain this sudden fit of terror.

He went to bed. When he was in the warmth of the covers, he began to think of

Therese again whom his terror had made him forget for the time being. Obstinate shutting the eyes waiting for sleep, his brain worked in spite of himself. He convinced himself of the advantage he would gain by marrying Therese at once. Then again he checked himself. He said to himself, "Don't think. Sleep. I must get up at eight o'clock in the morning in order to reach my office." And he made an effort to woo sleep. But thoughts began to work feverishly again. He soon found himself in a sort of a poignant reverie which showed him the necessity of marriage. He was assailed by arguments advanced by his desires and by his caution for and against having Therese.

Then, seeing that he could not sleep, that sleeplessness was irritating him, he turned on his back. He opened his eyes wide, and let his head be filled completely by the thoughts of the young woman. His equilibrium was disturbed. The old fever attacked him afresh. He wanted to get up and return to the passage of Pont-Neuf. He imagined that he was at the gate of the staircase and was opening the grille. He knocked at the door at the landing. Therese received him. At that thought, the blood rose into his head.

His imagination had a strange reality. He saw himself walking rapidly on the street, along the houses, saying to himself, "I take that road. I arrive at the cross-roads to reach the house soon." Then, the grille of the passage opened, and he followed the narrow gallery which was dark and deserted. He reached the top of the stair-case without meeting the jeweller.

Then, he was at the door where he often was in the past. He recalled to himself the sweet terror, the poignant love of adultery. His memories became realities which excited all his senses. He felt the damp air of the gallery. He touched its sticky walls. He saw the dark shadows which followed him. And he mounted every step, breathing heavily, carefully listening to every sound. He was about to be happy in the company of the woman he loved. Then he knocked at the door. The door opened. Therese was waiting for him there, in her white skirt.

His thoughts rolled on presenting before him a real spectacle. He fixed his eyes on the darkness and saw. When he was at the end of the road, he entered the passage and gained the small stair-case. He believed that he saw Therese. She was pale and anxious. He rose agitatedly from his bed, murmuring, "I must go to her. She is waiting for me." The sudden movement drove away his hallucination. He felt the cold floor under his bare feet. He was frightened. For an instant he remained motionless, listening, his feet bare. He seemed to hear the noise on the landing. If he went to Therese, he must pass again in the darkness of the gallery of his hotel. That thought sent a cold shiver through his body. His fear returned with redoubled. He looked round his room in defiance. He dragged his white limbs painfully. And then anxiously taking all precautions, he went to bed again. There he rolled up under the sheets as if to hide himself from a knife that threatened him.

His head was aching violently and his face was burning. He passed his hands on his neck

and felt the scar of Camille's bite under his fingers. He had almost forgotten that bite. He was terrified to find it on his skin. He believed that it will eat away his flesh. He removed his hand with a determined effort, in order not to touch the scar again. But he felt it always, devouring him, and drilling his neck. Then, he wished to scratch it delicately. The terrible itching redoubled itself. In order not to take off the skin by scratching too much, he forcibly put both his hands between his folded knees. Flushed and irritated, he remained thus, his teeth chattering with fear.

Now, his thoughts were directed to Camille with a frightful fixity. Until then, the drowned had not troubled Laurent's nights. But now, the thought of Therese brought with it the spectre of her husband. The murderer dared not open his eyes. He feared to see his victim in a corner of the room. In a moment, he imagined that his bed was being shaken. He imagined that Camille was hidden under the bed, and that it was he who shook it so. He believed that he wanted to murder him. Haggard, his hair falling on the forehead, he cramped himself on the mattress, believing that the shaking of the bed was becoming more and more violent.

Then, he perceived that the bed did not shake. He felt a reaction in him. He sat down, and lighted his candle, feeling terrified. In order to soothe himself, he drank a big glass of water.

"I was wrong to have taken wine at the shop." He thought, "I do not know what is happening to me this night. It is absurd. I

shall be tired in the office today. I am going to get into the bed and go to sleep at once. I must not think of all these things. It will keep me awake all night. Let me sleep."

He put out the light again. He pressed his head into the pillows. He felt some relief. He decided not to think any more, not to be afraid. Fatigue relaxed his nerves slightly.

He did not get the usual sleep, sound and undisturbed. He only passed into a vague somnolence, which benumbed his nerves into a sort of calm. He felt that his body was sleeping. His consciousness remained awake in a sleeping body. He had driven away the thoughts that surrounded him. He was safe against sleeplessness. Then when he was just drowsy and his will power was relaxing the thoughts returned to him, slowly, one by one taking possession of his weakened self. His reveries commenced again. He again crossed the distance that separated him from Therese. He went down the steps and found himself out of the hotel. He passed all the streets which he had passed before, when he was dreaming with his eyes open. He entered the passage of the Pont-Neuf, went up the small stair-case, and knocked at the door. But instead of Therese, instead of the young woman in her dress with neck open, it was Camille who opened it; Camille, just as he had seen him in the morgue! The spectre extended his arms to receive him, with an ignoble laughter, showing his teeth at the end of a long, dark passage.

Laurent gave out a cry, and awoke with a start. He was bathed in cold perspiration. He

pulled up the covers over the eyes, abusing himself, getting angry against his own self. He wished to sleep again.

As before, he went to sleep slowly. He had the same difficulty. When he was semi-conscious, he began to walk to the place where his fixed ideas directed him. He ran down to see Therese. But it was again the drowned one who opened the door.

Terrified, he seated himself again. He wished some one would drive away his painful dream. He wished for a heavy sleep that would erase all his thoughts. As long as he was awake, he had enough energy to drive away the phantom of his victim. But when he was no longer the master of his spirit, his spirit, in conducting him to his love, conducted him to the fearful spectre.

He tempted sleep again. It was a series of determined attempts to sleep, nightmares and sudden tortured awakening. In his obstinacy, he always tried to reach Therese. But every time he was brought against the dead body of Camille. For about ten times, he repeated the same acts with minute exactitude, and every time, to his great annoyance, he found the drowned man awaiting to embrace him; just when he was expecting to be received into the open arms of his mistress.

The last dream was so violent and so painful that Laurent decided to get up and not to try to sleep any more. The day dawned. A gray light entered into his room by the window which gave to the ash-coloured sky.

Laurent dressed slowly, with a secret irritation. He was exasperated at the sleepless night, exasperated at his allowing himself to be duped by such childish fears. Before putting on his trousers, he rubbed his limbs, he passed his hands over his face which had been battered by a feverish night. And he repeated :—

"I should not have thought of all this. I should have slept. I should have been fresh and active at this hour only if Therese had wished it Ah ! only if Therese had agreed to sleep with me last night."

That idea that Therese could have saved him from his fears, pacified him a little. At heart he was afraid of passing such nights as he had just endured, again.

He washed his face, and combed his hair. The toilet cooled his head and dissipated his terror. He argued that he was only fatigued a little.

"I am not a coward," he said to himself, "I do not care a straw for Camille.....It is absurd to believe that that poor devil could be under my bed. Now, perhaps, I shall believe it every night. Decidedly, it is necessary that I should marry Therese at once. When Therese takes me into her arms, I shall hardly think of Camille. She will kiss me on the neck, and I shall never feel that atrocious burning which I felt last night. Let me see that wound, though."

He approached the mirror, extended the neck and looked. The scar was the colour of a pale

rose. Laurent saw distinctly the marks of his victim's teeth there. He felt some disgust. The blood rushed to his head, and he felt strange. The scar became red, owing to the rush of blood. It stood out prominently on his white neck. At the same time, Laurent felt a sharp tingling in it, as if some one was pricking it. He hurriedly raised the collar of his shirt.

"Bah!" he said, "Therese shall cure it. Just a few kisses will suffice. What a fool I am to allow such thoughts!"

He took up his hat and descended the steps. He needed fresh air. He needed a walk. While passing the gallery below the office of the hotel, he smiled. Outside, he walked slowly on the deserted pavements in the fresh air of the morning. It was about five o'clock.

Laurent passed an awful day. He had to fight hard against drowsiness which assailed him in the afternoon in the office. In spite of the best efforts, his head, heavy with drowsiness, often drooped. He lifted it suddenly, as soon as he heard one of his officers coming. That struggle and those shocks tired him out completely, causing him an unbearable anxiety.

In spite of his fatigue, he went to see Therese in the evening. He found her to be feverish, troubled and tired like him.

"Our poor Therese passed a very bad night." Madam Raquin told him, when he was seated. "She had awful nightmares and could not sleep. Several times I heard her utter a cry. This morning, she was very ill."

While her aunt was speaking, Therese regarded Laurent fixedly. Doubtless, they divined

their common terror, for the same nervous shiver ran on both faces. They remained sitting opposite to each other until ten o'clock, talking of commonplace things. But they both understood each other fully, and wished to hasten the day when they would be joined together against the drowned man.

XVIII

Therese had also received a visit from Camille's ghost during that feverish night.

Laurent's proposal demanding a meeting after more than a year of indifference excited her suddenly. Her blood was boiling. When she was in bed alone, she thought that the marriage would take place soon. Then, during the attack of sleeplessness, she saw herself before the drowned man. Like Laurent she was tortured by desires and fear, and, like him, she also had told herself that she would have no fear and no suffering when she had her lover in her arms.

The experiences of the young woman and the youngman that night were identical and took place at the same time. A sort of a nervous distraction, which made them breathless and terrified, was experienced by both. A kinship of blood and suffering was established between them. They shivered with the same feelings. Their hearts being afflicted by the same love, suffered the same anguish. Now they had only one body and only one soul, for suffering or for joys. That community of feeling, that mutual penetration of heart, is psychological and physiological and has been often experienced by two sets of persons having the same nervous shocks.

For more than a year, Therese and Laurent lightly carried the chains that had united them in their sufferings after the murder, in their disgusts and in their needs. The two slaves of

their circumstances could believe that they were now free, that they were no longer bound by chains. The chain had now fallen to the ground. They were now struck by a sort of a happy stupor. They wished to love each other, to live a normal life. But the very day when, pushed by their physical needs, they came to exchange a few loving words, the chain was again violently thrown round them. They received such a shock that they never expected to be able to love each other.

On the following morning, Therese set herself to work. She worked seriously now to bring about her marriage with Laurent. That was a difficult task, full of perils. The two lovers were afraid of committing some blunder, or rousing the suspicions of others, if they showed any great interest suddenly in each other, after the death of Camille. Knowing that they could not broach the subject of their marriage to their friends, they thought out a careful plan whereby Madam Raquin herself, and her guests of Thursday evenings, would offer to them that which they themselves dared not ask for. It only needed a little suggestion to those brave people about Therese's remarriage, specially to make them believe that Laurent and Therese were attached to each other in the purity of their hearts.

The comedy to be played was a long and a delicate one. Therese and Laurent had adopted the roles that were convenient to them. They proceeded with extreme caution, calculating every little move and every little word that was necessary. At heart, they were devoured by their impatience which strained their nerves.

They lived in a continuous irritation. It needed a great effort on their part to appear smiling and calm when their hearts were burning with desire.

If, finally, they decided to hasten their plans, that was only because they could no longer remain separate and solitary. Every night they were visited by Camille's spectre. Their beds were covered with the burning charcoals of their hearts' desire, and sleeplessness. The nervous strain in which both of them lived, agitated them every evening, specially when they were reminded of their atrocious dreams. Therese was now afraid to enter her room after sunset. She felt the sharp pain of her anguish. When she was forced to be in the room, she shut herself up carefully, and kept the light burning throughout the night. For her room seemed to be inhabited by phantoms during darkness. She was never able to sleep. She kept her eyes wide open. When her eye-lids were lowered by the fatigue, she saw Camille in the darkness. She opened the eyes with a start. In the morning, she dragged herself out of the bed tired, not having slept even for an hour. During the day Laurent lived like a brute. He trembled and paled like a little child, even at the slightest noise. He had decidedly become chicken-hearted. Suddenly, a shiver used to pass through his body, and did not leave him for sometime. During the night, he suffered much more than Therese did. The fear made him a coward. He used to get up in the morning with cruel apprehensions. Several times, he was afraid of going to bed at all. He passed whole nights walking on the deserted streets. Once, he remained under a

bridge until the morning, even though it was raining. He was battered by rain, but remained crouching under the bridge, not daring to move out on the pavement. He remained thus for more than six hours, watching the dirty river water flowing in the darkness. Now and then he was frightened all of a sudden, and then he lay flat on his face on the wet ground. It appeared to him that in that running water, in the darkness under the arch of the bridge, passed a long line of the drowned bodies floating with the current. Finally, he was compelled by fatigue to return to his rooms where he double-locked himself. There, he fought against all sorts of fears until the dawn. The same nightmares persistently returned to him. He imagined himself being encircled by the passionate and loving arms of Therese, and by the cold and sticky arms of Camille, turn by turn. He dreamed that his mistress suffocated him with her warmth, and then he again saw that the drowned man drew him from that grasp in his own. Those sudden sensations of love and disgust, those alternate contacts with the sweet body of Therese, and the cold grasp of Camille's arms which had been sullied with the river mud, made him shiver and gasp for breath.

And everyday, the fears of the lovers increased. The nightmares troubled them more and more. They counted on nothing but their kisses to save them from the sleeplessness. On account of their caution, they dared not meet secretly. They waited for the day of their marriage which they hoped will be followed by a happy night.

It was thus that they looked for their union, so that they could sleep in peace. During their troubles, they forgot the reasons for having committed Camille's murder. They became feverish again and again. They were again overwhelmed by their passions, and then the reasons which had tempted them to kill Camille became distinct to them. In order to enjoy life peacefully, a legitimate marriage became a pressing necessity to them. Besides, it was with a vague despair that they took the supreme decision of being united openly. Each of them had at heart some doubt. But their desires compelled them. They were both at the brink of an abyss which horrified them. They drew back, in spite of themselves, cramped, mute. A sort of a dizziness took hold of them, giving them the sensation of a long fall. But in the face of the present necessity, they shut their eyes to the reality and dreamed only of the future which they hoped would bring them love, joy, and peace. They trembled before each other. They again felt the horror of that abyss into which they were going to throw themselves. But they were helpless in the face of fate which had decreed their marriage.

Therese was particularly desirous of marriage, because of her physical needs. She needed the violent carasses of Laurent. She was a prey to her nerves which maddened her. To tell the truth, she lost all reasoning power when she was thrown into her passion. Her spirit had been aroused by the romantic stories which she had read lately. Her body was irritated by the sleepless nights which she had been having for some weeks.

Laurent who was of a more callous temperament also yielded to his terrors and his desires. In order to prove to himself that his marriage was a necessity, that it would bring perfect happiness, that it would drive away all his fears, he thought out all the arguments in support of his decision. His father, the farmer from Jeufosse, seemed to have decided not to die. He could not, therefore, hope to get his heritage for a long time to come. He was also afraid that the heritage may not after all come to him. His father may leave it to one of his distant cousins, who would till the land to his father's satisfaction. He himself would thus always remain poor. He would be without a wife, living in a loft, miserably. Besides, he did not think of working all his life. He was already feeling tired of his work at the office. Even though the work that he was given was light, he was unwilling to do it, owing to his laziness. The result of the reflections was that he believed that happiness lies in being idle. Then, he recalled to himself that he had killed Camille for the sole reason of marrying Therese, so that he may have to do no work. True, the desire to possess his mistress for himself alone was mostly the reason for the crime. But he had been led to murder Camille also by the hope of stepping into his place of being cared for as Camille, enjoying all the comforts Camille had. If his passion alone had been involved, he would have thought twice before committing the murder. The reality was that he committed the crime in order to assure for himself a calm and idle life, the satisfaction of his desires. Consciously or unconsciously, he thought of all these arguments. He repeated to himself that it was time to derive

the long-awaited benefit from the death of Camille. He dreamed of the comfortable life that lay before him. He would resign from the office, he would lead a luxurious life. He would eat, drink and sleep as he liked. He would be in the loving embraces of a beautiful woman all the time, which would soothe his strained nerves. He would inherit more than forty thousand Francs of Madam Raquin, for the poor woman was dying little by little every-day. When he was in those happy circumstances, he would forget all; the crime, his present sleeplessness and his misery. He saw more advantages than this, and he was happy. Already he felt the thrills of the joy he would receive from Therese.

XIX

In the meantime, the secret efforts of Therese and Laurent produced results. Therese had adopted an attitude of despair and hopelessness. After a few days, seeing her in this condition, Madam Raquin became anxious. The old mercer wished to find out what was actually troubling her niece. Then, the young woman played the part of an inconsolable widow with great cunningness. She talked of boredom and nervous trouble vaguely, without being precise about anything. When her aunt pressed her further, she replied that she was well, that she did not care for her own troubles, and that she cried without knowing the reason. She said that sobs and other nervous attacks were only the sign of despair, owing to the great void that had been created in her life. Madam Raquin was seriously alarmed to see the young woman pale, with the wrinkled face which was a sign that she was dying of an unknown disease. She had no one in the world except her niece. She prayed to God every evening to save her. She felt some anguish to find herself in this position in her old age. She felt that she was going to be deprived of the only consolation which helped her to live in this world. She came to think that she would lose Therese and would die alone in this cold and damp shop of the passage. Since that time, she never allowed her niece to go out of her sight. She observed, with some fear, the sadness of the young woman. She asked herself as to how she could cure her of her silent despair.

In this serious condition, she believed in taking advice of her old friend, Michaud. On Thursday evening, she took him to the shop and told him everything with some nervousness. "Good God!" replied the old man with brutal frankness, so characteristic of the office that he held in the past, "I noticed for some time that Therese was missing something. I know very well why she is so pale and so worried."

"You know the cause?" asked the mercer, "tell me quickly, so that we should find the remedy."

"Oh! The treatment is simple," replied Michaud laughing, "your niece is bored because she has been alone at night in her room for about two years. She needs a husband. One can read that in her eyes."

The frankness with which the old police commissioner declared the fact made Madam Raquin sad. She thought that the wound which she received during that terrible accident at Saint-Ouen was still fresh, was still eating the heart out of the young widow. But her son being dead, the old woman thought that they could find no husband for her niece. And here was Michaud who was declaring that Therese was ill because she needed a husband!

"Marry her as soon as possible," the old man told her while leaving, "if you do not wish to see her completely broken down. This is my advice, Madam, and believe me, it is good advice."

Madam could not bring herself to believe that her son had already been forgotten. The old Michaud had not even pronounced Camille's

name. On the contrary, he lightly talked of the pretended illness of Therese. The poor mother now understood that she was the only one who preserved, in the heart of her hearts, the memory of her dear son. She began to cry. It appeared to her that Camille was dying a second time. Then, when she had cried enough, she thought, in spite of herself, of the advice Michaud had given. She accustomed herself to the idea of purchasing for herself a little peace with the price of a marriage which would kill her son afresh. When she was with Therese, she again began to cry. She was not one of those who accept the bitter joy of life in eternal despair. She found in her devotion gentleness and effusions of good feelings, common to all good women. She was kind and affable. Such a temperament helped her to pass her life in a tender affection. Since her niece no more talked to her and remained there pale and weak, existence for Madam Raquin became intolerable. The shop appeared to her to be a tomb. She desired warm affection all around her, life something sweet and gay, which would help her to await death happily. These unconscious desires made her accept the proposal of Therese's remarriage. For a moment, she even forgot her own son. It was a sort of a reawakening for her from a death-like existence that she was living. It brought to her new work. She searched for a husband for her niece. That filled her mind now. The choice of a husband was a great thing for her. The poor old woman thought more of herself than of Therese. She wished Therese to be married in such a way that she herself would be happy, for she was afraid that the new husband of the young woman might

create trouble during the last days of her old age. The idea of having to introduce a stranger in her life troubled her daily. That thought alone prevented her from consulting her niece openly about the marriage.

While Therese played with such a perfect hypocrisy for which her training had fitted her so well, the comedy of boredom and suffering, Laurent adopted the part of a sympathetic and helpful friend. He took every care of the two women, specially of Madam Raquin whom he plied with all delicate attentions. Gradually he made himself indispensable in the shop. He alone carried himself with some gaiety in that dark hole. Whenever he was not there in the evening, the old woman became uneasy and looked around her as if she had missed something. She was almost afraid of being alone with Therese in her despair. But it was only with a view to increase his influence that Laurent absented himself sometimes in the evening. He went to the shop everyday on return from his office. He remained there until the closing of the shop. He did a few odd jobs. He passed to Madam Raquin the things that she needed, for she could not move from her place, except with considerable pain. Then he sat down and talked. He had trained his voice, like an actor, to be sweet and penetrating. He used it to flatter the ears and heart of the good old woman. Specially, he expressed his concern for Therese's health. He impressed on the old woman that he was a friend and a good man whose heart went out to the suffering of others. Several times he told Madam Raquin confidentially that the terrible ravages on the young woman's face terrified him. While he said this,

he himself appeared very much frightened and anxious.

"We are going to lose her soon," he murmured with a voice full of emotion, "we cannot help thinking that she is quite ill. Oh, our poor luck! What peaceful and good evenings we used to have!"

Madam Raquin listened to him with great pain. Laurent had even the 'audacity to talk about Camille.

"See," he said to the old woman, "the death of my poor friend gave a terrible blow to Therese. She has tortured herself for about two years, since the unfortunate day when she lost Camille. Nothing will console her. Nothing will help her. We must resign ourselves to fate. These impudent lies made the old woman shed bitter tears. The memory of her son troubled her and blinded her. Everytime, the name of Camille was pronounced, she broke out in sobs. She abandoned herself. She used to grasp the hand of anybody who would mention the name of her poor boy. Laurent had observed the effect that the mention of Camille's name produced on her. It made her sob automatically. It made her throw herself into great emotion. Laurent knew that he could make her cry and thus make her helpless, at will, whenever he so desired. He abused this power of his to put her under his thumb more and more. Every evening, in spite of his own secret revolt, he managed to talk on the rare qualities of heart and head that Camille possessed." He lauded his victim to the skies with perfect impudence. Now and then, when he found

Therese gazing fixedly and strangely on him, he shuddered. He ended finally himself believing in all the good things that he said about the drowned man. Then he kept quiet, suddenly feeling terribly jealous. He feared that the widow loved only the man whom he had thrown into the water and whom he was now praising with such a conviction. During the whole of the talk, Madam Raquin saw nothing. She was only crying. She thought that Laurent had a loving and generous heart. He alone remembered her son. He alone still talked of him in a tone full of feeling and emotion. She dried her tears. She looked at the young man with great tenderness. She loved the young man as her own son.

One Thursday evening, Michaud and Grivet were in the Dining-room when Laurent entered and approached Therese, enquiring about her health. He sat down by her side for an instance, playing, for the benefit of the persons present there, the role of a greatly touched and anxious friend. As the two young people were engaged in conversation, Michaud, who regarded them attentively, went towards the old lady. He pointed Laurent out to her and said,

"There! There is the husband for your niece. Arrange for their marriage soon. If necessary, we shall help you."

Michaud smiled. To his mind, Therese needed a strong and vigorous husband. Madam Raquin saw a ray of hope. She at once saw the advantage which she will derive from the marriage between Therese and Laurent. That marriage will only bring her and her niece closer to

the friend of her son. In this way, it will not be necessary to introduce a stranger into the family. She did not run the risk of any trouble. On the contrary, while giving all her attention to Therese, she will make her own old age happy. She will find a second son in that young man who had shown her a filial affection for about three years. It also appears to her that in marrying Laurent, Therese would be less unfaithful to the memory of Camille. The human heart is a strange thing. Madam Raquin who would have wept if a stranger had embraced the young widow, felt no revolt at the thought of her being in the arms of the old friend of her son. She thought that it will not be known outside the family.

Throughout the whole evening, while the guests played at the dominoes the old woman looked at the two young people with affection. The young man and the young woman, seeing her thus, guessed that their labours had been rewarded, and that the event for which they had been working was near at hand. Before leaving, Michaud had a short conversation in a low voice with Madam Raquin. Then he took Laurent by the arm, and asked him to accompany him upto the end of the road. Laurent exchanged a quick glance with Therese, a glance cautioning her.

Michaud had been charged with preparing the ground. He found the young man very much devoted to the two women, but was very much surprised at the mention of marriage between Therese and himself. Laurent declared, with some emotion, that he loved the widow of his poor friend as his own sister, and that he

would commit sacrilege in marrying her. The old man insisted. He gave a hundred and one good reasons in order to obtain his consent. He talked of Laurent's attachment. He went so far as to say that it was the duty of the young man to make himself a son to Madam Raquin and a husband to Therese. Gradually, Laurent yielded. He pretended to be overwhelmed with emotion. He declared that he accepted the idea of marriage as an idea thrown to him from heaven, and dictated to him by his devotion and his duty, as much as a command from the old Mr. Michaud. When Michaud obtained a formal consent from Laurent, he left him and was overjoyed at the victory that, he believed, he had gained. He believed that he was the first to have introduced the idea of that marriage which would make the Thursday evenings now as jolly as in the past.

While Michaud was talking to Laurent on this subject, Madam Raquin had a similar talk with Therese. When her niece, who was pale and nervous as usual, was about to retire, the old woman detained her for a moment. She questioned her in a tender voice, supplicating to her to be quite frank about the trouble from which she suffered. Then, as she received only a vague reply, she talked of the empty life of widowhood, and little by little, she put before her the proposal of remarriage. She asked her plainly if she did not feel a secret desire for remarriage. Therese began to cry. She said she had no thought of anything except fidelity to Camille. Madam Raquin also began to cry. She pleaded, against the dictates of her heart. She declared that her despair would not be eternal.

Finally in response to the cries of the young woman who said repeatedly that never will she replace Camille by anybody else, Madam Raquin brusquely mentioned the name of Laurent. Then she broke into a flood of words, proving the advantages of this union. She poured out her soul and repeated loudly all that she had felt that evening. She painted naively the pictures of her past happiness with the two children. Therese listened to her with lowered head, with resignation and docility, ready to carry out anything that Madam Raquin wished.

"I love Laurent like a brother," she said sorrowfully when her aunt stopped, "but as you wish it, I shall try to love him as a husband. I wish to make you happy. I had hoped that you would leave me to bear my suffering in peace. But now I shall dry my tears, for such is your desire."

She kissed the old woman who remained astonished and frightened at having been the first to forget her own son. When she went to bed, Madam Raquin sobbed bitterly, accusing herself of not being as strong as Therese. She accused herself of bringing about a marriage which the young widow was accepting simply in resignation.

The following day, Michaud and the old woman had a short conversation in the passage at the door of the shop. They communicated to each other the result of their mission. They were satisfied in bringing about the engagement of the young people that very evening.

In the evening, at about five o'clock Michaud was already in the shop, when Laurent entered.

When the young man had taken his seat, the Ex-police Commissioner whispered in his ear,

"She has accepted."

That brutal statement referred to Therese, she remained pale, with her eyes fixed shamelessly at Laurent. The two lovers regarded each other for a few seconds as if to consult. They both understood that they must accept the position unhesitatingly. Laurent rose and went to Madam Raquin who made all efforts to restrain her tears, and took her hand.

"Dear mother," he said to her smiling, "I had a talk with Mr. Michaud last evening about your happiness. We, your children, wish to make you happy."

The poor old woman, finding herself being called, 'Dear Mother' let her tears roll down. She caught hold of Therese's hand and put it into Laurent's without a word.

The two lovers felt a shiver on their skins coming into contact. They held each other's hand in a nervous grasp. The young man spoke hesitatingly.

"Therese, do you desire that we should make your aunt happy and peaceful?"

"Yes," replied the young woman feebly, "we have a task to fulfil."

Laurent then turned towards Madam Raquin, very pale, and added :

"When Camille fell into the water, he cried to me, 'save my wife. I confide her to you.' I feel I am discharging that duty in marrying Therese."

Therese dropped Laurent's hand on hearing these words. She received a blow on her heart. The impudence of her lover shocked her. She looked at him with frightened eyes. Madam Raquin, who was sobbing, blurted out :

"Yes, yes, my friend. Marry her. Make her happy. My son will thank you from his grave."

Laurent felt that he was shuddering. He took support on the back of a chair. Michaud, who also was moved to tears, pushed him towards Therese, saying :

"Kiss her. That is your engagement."

The young man felt strangely uneasy as he put his lips on the young widow's cheeks. The latter recoiled suddenly, as if burnt by the two kisses of her lover. These were the first kisses that the young man had taken from her in the presence of witnesses. Her blood rose to the face. She became red and excited. She had never powdered her face or painted her lips in the infamy of her love-affair !

As soon as the crisis was over, the two murderers found their respiration returning. Their marriage was decided upon. They were in sight of the goal that they had been pursuing for such a long time. All arrangements were made that very evening.

The next Thursday, the news was announced to Grivet, Olivier and his wife. While giving that news, Michaud was exultant. He clapped his hands and said :

"It is I who thought of it. It is I who got them married. You will see the happy couple."

Suzanne kissed Therese silently. That poor creature, weak and white, took a liking for the young widow who looked gloomy and stiff. She loved her like a child, with a sort of respect. Olivier complimented the aunt and the niece. Grivet hazarded a few spicy jokes that did not succeed. In short, the whole company was happy and they declared that all was for the best. To tell the truth, they saw themselves already enjoying the wedding feast.

Therese and Laurent maintained a dignified and wise attitude. They simply witnessed a pre-possessing and kind friendship between them. They had the air of having fulfilled an act of supreme devotion. There was nothing on their faces which gave even the slightest hint of the fear and the desires that seemed to burn them inside. Madam Raquin regarded them with weak smiles, with kindness and gratefulness.

A few formalities had to be completed. Laurent had to write to his father for his consent. The old peasant of Jeufosse, who had almost forgot that he had a son at Paris, replied to him in four lines, saying that he could marry and do anything he liked. He gave him to understand that he was resolved never to give him a penny, and that he was the master of his own body. He authorised him to commit all the follies of the world. An authorisation given thus specially disturbed Laurent.

Madam Raquin, having read the letter from that cruel father, was overwhelmed with a flow of generosity which led her to commit a folly. She endowed the forty thousand and some odd Francs that she had in the name of her niece. She impoverished herself completely

for the benefit of the new couple, herself depending on the goodness of their heart. It was in this way that she extended her congratulations to the couple. Laurent brought nothing. He even hoped that he would not have to keep his job in the office for long. He hoped to set up perhaps as a painter. Besides, the future of the small family was assured. The interest on the forty thousand Francs together with the profit from the shop, would be quite enough to maintain three people. They were justified in being happy.

The preparations for marriage were hurried. They cut down as many formalities as possible. Everyone seemed to be in a hurry to push Laurent into Therese's bed-room. Finally, the expected day arrived.

XX

In the morning, Laurent and Therese, both in their own rooms, awoke with the same thought of profound joy. Both said to themselves that their last night of terror was over. They will never sleep alone. They will together defend themselves against the drowned man.

Therese looked around her and had a strange smile, while measuring the large bed with her eyes. She rose, and then dressed up slowly, waiting for Suzanne who was to help her in her nuptial toilet.

Laurent sat down on his bed and remained thus for some minutes. He was bidding good-bye to the garret room which was ignoble for him. Finally, he was going to be rid of that wretched hovel and was going to marry. It was December. He was shivering. He jumped out of the bed, saying that he will be warm that evening.

Madam Raquin, knowing how hard up he was, had slipped into his hands, a week before, a purse containing five hundred Francs, which was all that she had saved. The young man had accepted the purse without demur. He got new clothes. Besides, the old woman's money enabled him to buy a few presents for Therese.

The black trousers, coat and a white waistcoat, the shirt and a fine silk tie, all these were spread on the two chairs. Laurent washed himself with soap, perfumed his body with Eau de Cologne, then he proceeded minutely with his toilette. He wished to look handsome. As

he was putting on the collar, he felt sharply and poignantly the mark of the old bite on the neck. The button of the collar dropped from his hand. He became impatient and appeared to be suffocated. He wished to see the mark. He therefore went to the mirror and perceived it, all red. The hard collar had slightly scratched it. Laurent bit his lips and became pale. The sight of that spot on his white neck frightened him, and irritated him at that moment. He selected another collar which he fastened with great care. Then he finished dressing. As he descended the steps his new clothes made him quite stiff. He could not turn his head, the neck being imprisoned in the hard linen. At every movement that he made, the hard collar pinched the skin on the neck in the same way in which Camille had pierced his teeth into his flesh. It was in such a suffering that he entered into a carriage and drove to the shop to lead Therese to the Altar.

On his way, he picked up one of his friends from the office and Mr. Michaud, who were to be his witnesses. When he arrived at the shop, everybody was ready. There were Grivet and Olivier who were to be witnesses for Therese, and Suzanne who looked at the couple as the little girls look at dolls which they themselves have dressed up. Madam Raquin could not walk, but she wished to accompany her children everywhere. They hailed a carriage and started for the church. Everything passed off peacefully at the church. The calm and modest attitude of the couple was noticed and approved of by everybody. They pronounced the sacramental 'Yes' with an emotion which surprised

even Grivet. They appeared to be in a dream. As they sat kneeling side by side quietly, furious thoughts entered into their mind in spite of them and troubled them a good deal. Each avoided the other's gaze. As they entered into the carriage again, it appeared to them that they were greater strangers to each other than before.

It had been decided that the marriage feast was to be held in a small restaurant at the heights of Belleville. Michaud and Grivet alone were invited. After waiting for six hours the company proceeded in a carriage all along the boulevards and arrived at the restaurant where a table, with seven covers, had been laid in a room painted yellow. The room was dusty and smelt of wine.

The food served was ordinary. The married couple was grave and pensive. They had been feeling strange sensations since the morning, which they themselves could not account for. From the very beginning they found themselves morose and fatigued by the numerous formalities and ceremonies which followed in order to join them for life. Then, the long drive along the boulevards made them feel drowsy. They felt as if that drive lasted for a full month. They became impatient by the monotony of the streets. They looked at the shops and the passers-by with dull eyes. They tried to get rid of their moroseness by a few attempts at laughter. When they entered the restaurant they were completely tired out and were assailed by a stupor.

They sat at the table opposite to each other and smiled with some constraint. But they

always fell back into some unpleasant reverie. They ate, they talked to each other, and moved their limbs, just like a machine. In the midst of it all the same frightful thought occurred to them repeatedly. They were now married, but they were not conscious of any novelty in their state. This astonished them greatly. They felt that a great gulf separated them still. Now and then, they asked themselves how to remove that gulf. They believed they were still living in the days before the murder when there was a physical obstacle between them. Then, suddenly, they recalled to themselves that they were going to sleep together that night. That would be in a few hours. Then they were astonished. They could not understand why that would be permitted. They did not yet fully realise that they were married. On the contrary, they had a premonition that they will be separated violently and will be removed very far away from each other.

The guests who were cutting jokes around them madly, wished them to address each other more intimately in order to dissipate their nervousness. They stammered. Their faces became pink. They could not bring themselves to act as lovers before the whole world.

During the long waiting, their desires cooled down. All their past hopes disappeared. They lost their voluptuous appetite. They even forgot the great joy which they had felt in the morning; that great joy which had made them think that they had nothing to fear now. They were simply tired and bewildered at all that was happening to them. They considered the events

of the day, events which looked incomprehensible and monstrous. They remained there mute, smiling, hearing nothing, and expecting nothing. At the root of their trouble lay a vague and painful anxiety.

And Laurent, at every moment of his neck, felt a sharp pain that seemed to burn his flesh. His collar was pinching at the scar of Camille's bite. While the clerk was reading the code to him; while the priest talked to him of God; for every single minute of that long day, he had felt the teeth of the drowned man piercing into his skin. At times, he imagined that a trickle of blood was running down his chest and spoiling the white waistcoat.

Madam Raquin was secretly thankful to the couple for their gravity. A painful joy was hurting the poor mother. For her, the son was there, though invisible. She imagined that he was giving Therese's hand into Laurent's. Grivet did not have such thoughts. He found the marriage feast rather dull. Vainly, he tried to make it lively. Michaud and Olivier always dissuaded him by their looks whenever he wanted to say something foolish. Once, however, he succeeded in rising from his chair. He proposed a toast.

"I drink to the health of the children of the couple." He said in a lively tone. They touched their glasses. Therese and Laurent became extremely pale on hearing Grivet's words. They had never thought that they might have children. That thought sent a cold shiver through their body. They struck their glasses nervously. Each examined the other, surprised and frightened to be there, face to face.

They rose from the table early. The guests desired to accompany the couple upto the bridal room. It was only half-past nine when the party returned to the shop in the Passage. The imitation jewel merchant was still there, before her box covered with blue velvet. She raised her head in curiosity, regarding the newly married couple with a smile. They were surprised by her looks, and were terrified. Perhaps that old woman knew of their meetings in the past, when Laurent slipped quietly through the small alley.

Therese retired almost immediately with Madam Raquin and Suzanne. The men remained in the dining room, while the married couple made their toilette for the night. Laurent was weak and depressed. He did not show even the least sign of impatience. He listened complacently to the coarse jokes cut by Michaud and Grivet, who were making merry to their heart's content now that the ladies were not there. Suzanne and Madam Raquin then left the bridal chamber. As the old woman said to the young man, in a voice full of great emotion, that his wife was waiting for him, he shivered. For a moment, he was scared. Then he feverishly caught hold of the hands that were extended to him and entered Therese's room supporting himself by the door, as if he was drunk.

XXI

Laurent carefully closed the door behind him and remained standing against that door for a moment, looking into the room with an air of disquiet and embarrassment.

A smokeless fire was burning in the chimney, throwing large, clear, yellow flames which reflected the floor and the walls of the room. The room was thus lighted by a vascillating flame. The lamp was placed on a table and appeared pale in that light from the chimney. Madam Raquin had desired that the room should be decorated tastefully. It was therefore absolutely white and perfumed, as if made ready to serve as the nest for the fresh love of the two youths. She had placed a few more laces to the canopy of the bed and had put more roses in the flower pots on the chimney. A comfortable warmth was filling the room. The air was calm and peaceful, ready for a sort of ardent love. In the middle of that silence the crackling of the fire alone made a little noise. That room was like a secluded corner, warm and good, shutting out all the noise from outside, one of those corners made ready for the sensual needs of the mystery of Passion.

Therese was seated on a low chair to the right of the chimney. Her wrap in her hand, she was looking at the flames with a fixed gaze. She did not even turn her head as Laurent entered. Drèssed in a skirt and a jacket with fine lacing, she appeared very white in the strong light of the fire. Her wrap slipped down a little,

exposing a corner of her rosy shoulder which was half covered by a mesh of black hair.

Laurent took a few steps without speaking. He removed his coat and his waistcoat. When he was only in his shirt, he regarded Therese, who had not budged even an inch afresh. He appeared to be hesitating. Then he noticed the exposed shoulder and bent down shivering to kiss that piece of naked skin. The young woman withdrew the shoulder as she turned suddenly. She fixed on Laurent such a strange, repugnant and frightened look that he recoiled, troubled and uneasy as if he himself was terrified and disgusted.

Laurent took his seat opposite Therese, on the other side of the chimney. They remained thus, mute, motionless for full five seconds. Now, and then, flames from the chimney reflected the anxious looks on the faces of the two murderers.

It was after about two years that the lovers found themselves shut up in the same room without anybody to see them, enabling them to act as they liked. They had never had any love meeting since the day when Therese visited Laurent in the Rue Saint-Victor, carrying with her the idea of murder to him. The need for caution had compelled them to let their bodies go hungry. It was only at long intervals that they could get a hand-shake or a little furtive kiss. After Camille's murder, new desires took hold of them again. But they were quite satisfied to await the bridal night. They promised themselves all sorts of voluptuous joys when marriage gave them their immunity. Finally,

the bridal night arrived. They were sitting opposite to each other. But a sudden anxiety made them uneasy. They had only to hold out their arms to have each other in a passionate embrace. But their arms appeared numbed, as if they were already tired of love. The fatigue and the suffering of the day were pressing on them more and more. They looked at each other without any longing. They were embarrassed to find themselves silent and cold in this way. The burning dreams of the past ended strangely. It was enough that they had killed Camille, it was enough that they were married together, and it was enough that Laurent's lips had just brushed Therese's shoulder, for their sensual desires had been killed by disgust and fear.

They tried to revive even a little of their passion which they had felt for each other in the past. It appeared to them that their muscles and nerves had no life. Their embarrassment and uneasiness thwarted them. They felt ashamed to sit speechless and dejected in front of each other in this way. They wished to have the strength to clasp each other, and to crush each other, so that they should not appear to be imbeciles in their own eyes! What a shame! They belonged to each other, they killed a man and acted an atrocious comedy in order to enjoy life to the full. But there they were, at the two corners of the chimney, stiff, tired, suffering, and their bodies motionless! Should such an event end so ridiculously, so horribly and so cruelly? Laurent, therefore, tried to talk of love. He evoked the past memories. He appealed to his imagination to revive his love.

"Therese," bending towards the young woman he said, "do you remember our afternoons in this room? I used to enter by that door. Today, I have entered by this one. We are free. We are going to love each other in peace now."

He spoke in a hesitating manner, slowly. The young woman, crouching in the low chair, looked continuously at the flames, meditating, and hearing nothing. Laurent continued :

"Do you remember? I had a dream. I wished to pass one whole night with you, sleeping in your embrace and awaking in the morning under your kisses. My dream is going to be fulfilled now."

Therese made a little movement as if surprised at hearing somebody speaking to her. She turned towards Laurent and saw his face reflecting the red glow of the fire in the chimney. She looked at that bloody face and trembled.

The young man continued with greater uneasiness :

"We have succeeded, Therese. We have removed all obstacles. We belong to each other. The future is ours. Isn't it? A future full of comfort, peace and love. Camille is no longer between us."

Laurent stopped suddenly, his throat parched. He felt as if he was being strangled. He could not continue. At the mention of Camille, Therese received a shock. The two murderers looked at each other, weak, pale and trembling. The yellow light of the fire danced continually

on the floor and walls. The sweet odour of the roses filled the room. The burning twigs in the chimney disturbed now and then the silence of the room with their crackling sound.

The memories were shameful. They revived the spectre of Camille, who came to take his seat between the new couple, before the flaming fire. Therese and Laurent felt the cold and moist air given out by the drowned man in the warm air that they were breathing. They felt that the dead body was there between them. It appeared to examine them without moving. The whole picture of their crime passed before their eyes. The name of the victim was enough to fill them with their past, and obliged them to go through all the anguish that followed the assassination. They could not open their lips. They simply regarded each other. Both of them had the same nightmare at the same time. Both of them hinted to each other by their eyes the same cruel story. That exchange of looks, that mute recital of the details of the murder, caused them a sharp and intolerable pain. Their nerves were in such a state that they might have cried out, or might have attacked each other. In order to drive away these painful memories, Laurent suddenly pulled himself up from the frightful trance. He walked a few paces in the room, and then took off his boots. He put on the slippers and came back to the corner of the chimney. He tried to talk of something else.

Therese understood his meaning. She forced herself to answer his questions. They talked of the rain and the fine weather. They tried to force themselves into a light conversation. Laurent declared that it was hot in the room.

Therese replied that air currents passed, nevertheless, under the door of the landing. They turned towards the small door with a sudden start. The young man hastened to talk of the roses, of the fire and of anything that he saw. The young woman tried, with some effort, not to let the conversation drop. They both tried to draw away from each other. They appeared as if they were released from each other. They tried to forget who they were, and treated themselves as if they were mere strangers brought face to face.

And in spite of them, by a strange phenomenon, while they spoke the meaningless words, they were both conscious of the thoughts that these words were meant to hide. They automatically thought of Camille. Their eyes continued a recital of the past. They carried on a coherent conversation with their mute looks, behind the haphazard words spoken in a loud voice. The words that they spoke were disconnected, they signified nothing; they belied themselves. The whole of their being was engaged in exchanging silently the thoughts of the fearful crime. While Laurent talked about the roses, or the fire, or something else, Therese clearly understood that he was reminding her of the fight in the boat and Camille's disappearance in the water. When Therese replied to some insignificant question of Laurent by 'yes' or 'no', he understood her to mean that one should not recall the details of a crime. They conversed in this way with their hearts, without needing the spoken words that they were using to describe something else. For every phrase, there was some secret thought. They could have suddenly

taken up the thread of their real conversation in spoken words, without any difficulty in understanding each other. That sort of understanding, and that persistence of their memory, brought Camille's image before their eyes constantly. Slowly, they softened a little. They realised that each understood the other. If they did not keep quiet, they would be naming the drowned man, and afterwards describing the murder in detail, therefore, they deliberately shut their lips. They stopped their conversation.

In their painful silence, the two murderers still thought of their victim. It appeared to them that their looks penetrated each other's body to put the painful memory there. Now and then they believed that they heard each other talking loudly. Their senses became strangely delicate. Their eyes read clearly on their faces the secret thoughts of each other. They could not have understood themselves better, even if they had cried out in a loud voice, "We killed Camille. His body is here between us, touching us." These terrible confidences that they were exchanging between them were becoming more and more real, more and more resounding, in that calm atmosphere of the room.

Laurent and Therese had begun to exchange these confidences mutely and silently, the very first day they met in the shop after the crime. The details were recalled silently, one by one. They had counted the hours of their happiness. Then they thought of the moments of doubt and of anger. They thought of the murder. But that at once sealed their lips. Conversation

ceased for fear of naming Camille unexpectedly. But their thoughts did not cease. They thought of the anguish which they suffered after the assassination. Thus, they were led to think of the dead body of the drowned man as it was exposed in the Morgue. With one look, Laurent expressed all his fear to Therese. Therese was obliged, by some unseen force, to continue the conversation suddenly in a loud voice.

"You saw him in the Morgue?" she asked Laurent, without naming Camille.

Laurent appeared to be hesitating at that question. He had read it already on her face.

"Yes," he replied in choking voice.

The murderers felt a shiver pass through their body. They both came nearer the fire. They held out their hands before the flames, as if a sudden draught of cold air had passed into the room. For a moment they were silent and crouching in their chairs. Then Therese continued hoarsely :

"Did he appear to have suffered much?"

Laurent could not reply. He made a frightened movement, as if he was driving away some terrible vision. He got up and went towards the bed, but returned at once with terror. He advanced towards Therese with open arms.

"Kiss me," he said, extending his neck.

Therese was standing, pale in her night toilette. She bent herself slightly on the back, supporting her elbows on the chimney marble. She looked at Laurent's neck. On the white skin, she observed a pink mark. The rush of blood made that mark very red.

"Kiss me! Kiss me!" repeated Laurent, feeling his face and the neck burning.

The young woman turned her head away to avoid a kiss. Putting her finger tip on Camille's bite on the neck, she asked her husband :

"What have you got there? I never knew of that wound."

It seemed to Laurent that her finger was piercing a hole into his throat. On the touch of that finger, he made a sudden recoiling movement, and gave out a low cry of pain.

"That," he said, "That..." He hesitated, but he could not lie. He told the truth, in spite of himself.

"It was Camille who bit me, you know, in the boat. It was nothing. It is cured. Kiss me. Kiss me."

And the unhappy man held out the neck which seemed to burn. He desired that Therese should kiss him on that scar. He thought that her kisses will soothe the pricks which seemed to tear his flesh. His collar off, neck forward, he offered himself to her. Therese, almost lying on the chimney marble now, showed great disgust, and cried in an appealing tone :

"Oh, No! Not there! There is blood!"

She fell back into the low chair, shivering, her forehead between the hands. Laurent looked stupid. He regarded Therese vaguely. Then, suddenly, like a brute, he caught hold of her in his big hands and forcibly put her lips on his neck, on the spot where Camille had bit him.

He kept her head against his skin for some instants. Therese was helpless. She uttered some hollow wails. She was being suffocated on Laurent's neck. When she was able to free herself with her fingers, she wiped her mouth violently. She spat in the fire. She did not say even a word.

Laurent, ashamed of his brutality, began to walk slowly, from the bed to the window and back. He was suffering greatly. The burning on the neck was increased considerably by Therese's one kiss. Therese's cold lips on the burning scar made him suffer more. That kiss, obtained with force, burned him more. Nothing in the world would make him desire another such kiss, while the shock was still painful. He looked upon the woman with whom he had to live, and who was crumpled up in her chair before the fire, with her back towards him. He repeated to himself that he did not love that woman any more, nor did she love him. For about an hour, Therese remained thus afflicted. Laurent kept on walking silently. They both realised that their passion for each other was dead, that in killing Camille they had killed their own passion. The fire went out slowly, leaving a big furnace of burning coals. Gradually, the heat in the room became suffocating. The flowers faded, languishing in the thick air of the room.

Suddenly, Laurent believed that he had a hallucination. As he turned from the window towards the bed, he saw Camille in a dark corner of the room, between the chimney and the wardrobe. His victim's face was greenish and convulsed, the same as he had noticed in the

Morgue. He remained standing on the carpet, almost fainting, and supporting himself against a chair making strange noise. Hearing the heavy gurgling noise that he made, Therese raised her head.

"There ! There !" Laurent said in a terrified voice.

He held out his arm to point out the dark corner where he perceived Camille's sinister face. Attracted by fear, Therese went to stand near him.

"That is his portrait," she murmured in a low voice, as she recognised the painting for her former husband.

"His portrait ?" Laurent repeated, his hair standing in their roots.

"Yes, you know, the painting that you had made. My aunt was going to have it in her room from today, but she forgot to take it down.

"Quite sure. It is his portrait." The murderer hesitated in recognising the canvas. In his trouble, he forgot that it was he himself who had put those frightful colours. He hesitated for a moment believing that Therese was telling a lie in order to reassure him. Then he distinguished the frame work of the picture and gradually calmed down.

"Go and take it down," he said very slowly to the young woman.

"Oh, No. I am afraid," she replied with a shudder.

Laurent began to tremble. Now and then the frame work of the picture disappeared to him. He could see nothing but the two white spots of the eyes which fixed themselves at him.

"I beseech you," he appealed to his companion, "go and take it down."

"No, no."

"We shall turn it towards the wall, we shall not fear then."

"No, I cannot do it."

The murderer, weak and humble, pushed the young woman towards the picture, himself keeping behind her, in order to keep out of the sight of the drowned man. She escaped him. He wished to appear to be courageous. He approached the picture, raised his hand, and looked for the nail. But the portrait had such a frightening look, so ignoble, so long, that Laurent, having tried to struggle against it, was defeated and came back troubled and murmuring.

"No. You are right, Therese. We cannot do it. Your aunt will take it down tomorrow."

He resumed his walk lowering his head, feeling that the picture was looking at him, was following him with the eyes. He could not prevent himself from throwing a few glances, now and then, at the picture. In the darkness he always perceived the stern look of the drowned man. The thought that Camille was there, in the corner fighting him, disturbing him on his bridal night, examining them both, Therese and himself, completed Laurent's terror and despair.

A fact, on which everybody should have laughed, made him lose his head completely. As he stood before the chimney, he heard a sort of a rattling. He became pale. He imagined that that noise came from the portrait, that Camille was coming out of the picture. Then, he found out that the noise came from the small door on the landing. He looked at Therese.

"There is some one on the landing," he murmured, "who could come by that door."

The young woman did not answer. Both of them were thinking of the drowned man. Cold perspiration stood on their temples. They lay themselves down on the floor waiting to see the door open suddenly and letting the dead body of Camille fall on the carpet. The noise continued, more irregularly. They imagined that their victim was scratching the wood with his knuckles to gain an entrance into the room. For about five minutes, they could not move. Finally, they heard the purring of a cat. Laurent recognized Madam Raquin's tiger cat who was shut up in the room by chance, and who was trying to get out by the small door. The cat was afraid of Laurent. It jumped over a chair with a bound. It looked its new master in the face, with a hard and a cruel look. The young man did not love cats. This one had already frightened him. That moment in his anxiety he believed that the cat was going to throw itself on his face, in order to avenge Camille. That beast was a wise one. Its thoughts appeared in its round and strangely dilated eyes. Laurent lowered his eyes before the fixed gaze of the animal. As he was about to kick the cat:

"Don't harm it!" cried Therese.

That cry made a strange impression on him. An absurd idea filled his head.

"Camille has entered into that cat," he thought, "I must kill that beast. It has the appearance of a man."

He did not kick, fearing that the cat would begin to talk to him in Camille's voice. Then he recalled the jokes that Therese had made about the cat in the past, during the time of their love meeting, when the cat was a witness to their voluptuousness. He told himself that the animal knew too much and it was necessary to throw it out of the window. But he had not the courage to accomplish his designs. The cat remained in an attitude of fight. It followed with great caution even the least movement of its enemy. Laurent was annoyed by the metallic shine of its eyes. He hastened to open the door of the dining-room, and the cat went out, giving a sharp mewing.

Therese was again seated before the fire which had already died out. Laurent began to walk again. It was in this way that they waited for the day to dawn. They never thought of going to bed. Their bodies, and their hearts, were quite dead even to the least desire. There was only one desire left to them, the desire to escape from that room where they were almost being suffocated. They felt uneasy, finding themselves shut together in the same room, breathing the same air. They wished for some one who could have broken their *tete-a-tete*, and pulled them out of their cruel embarrassment. Their long silence tortured them. That silence was full of bitter and desperate wails, the mute

reproach, which they heard distinctly in the tranquil air.

Finally, the dawn came, grey and whitish, bringing with it a piercing cold.

When the clear pale light of the day filled the room, Laurent felt more calm. He looked before him at Camille's portrait. He took it down on his shoulders as if he was a beast. Therese had risen from her seat and rumped the bed sheets in order to deceive her aunt that they had passed a very happy night.

"Ah, that!" Laurent said to her brutally, "I hope we shall sleep this evening. This childishness will not last." Therese threw him a grave and a profound glance.

"You understand," he continued, "I have not married for passing blank nights. We are children. It was you who troubled me, with your airs of the other world. This evening you shall try to be gay and not to frighten me."

He tried to force himself to laugh, without knowing why he wanted to laugh.

"I shall try," the young woman replied hoarsely.

Thus ended the bridal night of Therese and Laurent.



XXII

The nights that followed were still more cruel. The murderers had wished to be together during nights, in order to defend themselves against the drowned man. But by some strange effect, as soon as they found themselves together they were frightened more. They exasperated themselves, they were irritated. They were subjected to an atrocious suffering and terror when they tried to exchange even a simple word, even a simple look. At the slightest attempt at conversation between them, at the slightest attempt at intimacy, they flushed and became delirious.

Therese's nervousness had acted strangely upon the callous nature of Laurent. In the past, during those passionate meetings, their different temperaments made them feel a strong attachment for each other. A sort of an equilibrium had been established between them. One was the complement of the other. The man contributed life, and the woman, the feeling. Each made life complete for the other. They needed each other's kisses to regulate the mechanism of their being. But now, their life had been disturbed. Therese's over-excited nerves dominated everything. Laurent found himself, all of a sudden, in a nervous breakdown. Under the strong influence of the young woman, he began to suffer from Neurosis like a girl.

Before meeting Therese Laurent had a prudent, sanguine life of a farmer's son. He slept, ate and drank like a brute. He was free and

contented with himself. He had hardly felt the murmuring of his heart. It was Therese who encouraged those murmurings which finally resulted in horrible shocks. He had introduced in his big, fat and callous body a nervous system which had a surprising sensitiveness. Laurent who had lived before, more by the blood than by the nerves, had least sensitive nerves. A nervous existence, poignant and new for him, suddenly revealed itself to him at the first kiss received from his mistress. That kiss maddened him and gave a new character to his life.

There was a time when his nerves and blood were in equilibrium. That was the time of the greatest joy for him. It was a perfect existence. Then the nerves began to dominate. He fell into the anguish which shook his body and spirit.

It was thus that Laurent found himself trembling before a dark corner like a frightened child. He became entirely a new being who exhibited all the fears, and all the anxieties of nervous temperament. All the circumstances—the mad carresses from Therese, the feverishness of murder, the frightful waiting for voluptuousness, all those had rendered him mad. Finally, sleeplessness, bringing in its trail, hallucinations made his life intolerable.

His remorse was purely physical. His body, his irritated nerves alone, feared the death man. His consciousness never entered into those terrors, never had the least regret for having killed Camille. When he was calm, and when he did not see Camille's ghost before him, he could have committed another murder, if he had

thought it to his interest. During the day, he laughed at his fears. He promised to be strong. He accused Therese of being afraid. According to him, it was Therese alone who shivered with fear. It was Therese alone who introduced the frightful subject during the night in her room. But when night came and when he was shut up with his wife in the room, cold perspiration stood out on his skin. Childish fears shook him. He became a prey to periodical hysterics.

Therese also fell a prey to these profound fears. But for her it was only a slight exaggeration of what she had always suffered in life. Since the time she was six years of age, she had been suffering from nervous disorder. She shivered whenever there was a thunder. Laurent was for her what she was for him, a sort of a brutal shock. From the very first moment of her love, her nervous temperament developed almost a savage energy. She lived only for her passion. In her fears she showed herself more of a woman. She had a vague remorse. Perhaps Laurent perceived her weakness. He went near her. He dragged her to himself with brutality.

For the first few nights they could not sleep. They waited for the day to dawn, seated before the fire, or walking in the room as on the bridal night. The idea of lying in the bed together caused them a sort of repugnance. By a sort of a tacit agreement, they avoided to embrace each other. When they felt tired, they went to sleep in their chairs to wake up with a start under the influence of a sinister nightmare.

Then, they fought against sleep as much as they could. They sat on the two corners of the chimney and talked of formal things, taking care not to let the conversation drop. They were at a considerable distance from each other. When they turned their head they imagined that Camille had occupied the space between them, and was warming his feet in an awkward manner. That vision which they had seen on the bridal night returned to them. They could not move.

Finally, Laurent did not like to sit even. Therese knew that he saw Camille as she herself saw him. She declared that the heat in the room was too much for her. She pushed her chair near the bed, while her husband continued pacing the room. Now and then he opened the window to let in the cold January air which cooled him a little.

For the last week the newly married couple passed whole nights in this way. They rested a little during the day. Therese behind the counter in the shop and Laurent in his office. What troubled them most was their strange behaviour to each other. They never talked of love. They pretended to have forgotten the past. They tolerated each other.

Their fatigue soon reached such a point that one night they decided to go to bed. They did not undress. They threw themselves on the bed completely dressed, without even removing the bed-cover. They feared that their skins might touch. They feared that they would receive a painful shock at the slightest touch of their bodies. For two nights, they slept like this,

getting a sort of a feverish sleep. Then, they decided to take off their clothes before going to bed and sleep under the blankets. But they remained separate from each other. They took care not to let their bodies come together. Therese ascended the bed first and lay down on the side of the wall. Laurent waited until she was fully stretched. Then, Laurent got in and lay on the other side of the bed. They left a space between them. That space was occupied by Camille's ghost.

As the two murderers lay under the same blanket, and as they closed their eyes, they imagined that they felt the wet body of their victim, sleeping between them. This thought froze their bodies. It was a mean obstacle that separated them. They became feverish and delirious, and that obstacle between them became material. They touched his body. They breathed the same foul breath given out by him. Their sensations became intolerable. The presence of that inconvenient companion in bed made them motionless, silent, and full of anguish. Laurent thought of violently taking Therese in his arms. But he dared not budge. He told himself that he could not extend his arm without taking a handful of the rotten flesh of Camille. He thought that the drowned man came to sleep between them to prevent them from embracing. He decided that Camille was jealous.

However, they tried to exchange a kiss in order to see what happened. The young man ordered his wife to kiss him. But their lips were cold. It appeared that death had placed itself between their mouths. They felt nauseat-

ed. Therese had a fit of terror, and Laurent, whose teeth were clattering, stuck to her.

"Why do you tremble?" he cried to her, "are you afraid of Camille? Nonsense! The poor man is lying on his back in the grave at this hour."

They both avoided to mention the cause of their fear. When in a hallucination, they saw the awful face of the drowned man, they shut their eyes. They did not dare to talk of that vision, for fear that it may bring about a nervous crisis. When Laurent, lying on one side, in a rage of despair, accused Therese of being afraid of Camille, the mention of that name redoubled their fears. The murderer became delirious:

"Yes, yes," he cried, addressing the young woman, "you are afraid of Camille. By Jove! I can see it! You are a fool! You do not possess even a little courage. Well, sleep peacefully. Do you believe that your old husband would carry you away by your legs, because I am lying with you?"

That idea, that supposition that the drowned man could pull them by their legs, made their hair stand on end. Laurent continued with greater vehemence:

"I must take you one day to the Cemetery. We shall open Camille's coffin, and you will see that little rotten mass. Perhaps you will not then be afraid. He does not know that we threw him into the water."

Therese was choked with cries, her head under the blanket.

"We threw him into the water, because he disturbed us?" continued her husband, "we

shall throw him there again. Isn't it? Don't be a child like this. Have courage. It is foolish to disturb our peace. Do you see, my dear, that we shall die? We shall not be happy, neither more nor less, on this earth, because we have thrown an imbecile into the Seine! We shall now enjoy our love freely. That is an advantage. Do you see? Embrace me."

The young woman embraced him, cold and shivering. He was shivering as much as she.

For more than a fortnight, Laurent thought how he could kill this new Camille. He had thrown him into the water. But here he was, not quite dead. He returned every night to sleep with Therese. When the murderers believed that they had finished the murder, and that they could enjoy themselves in peace, their victim resuscitated himself in order to make their bed cold. Therese was not a widow. Laurent found himself to be a husband to a woman who already had a drowned man for a husband!

XXIII

By and by, Laurent became furious. He resolved to drive away Camille from his bed. At first he went to bed undressed, and tried not to touch Therese. Now, in his rage and despair, he wished to press his wife against his heart, to crush her sooner than to leave her to the spectre of his victim. That was a brutal revolt.

The hope that Therese's kisses would drive away his sleeplessness alone had brought him to the young woman's room. When he found himself in that room, as a master, he never thought for an instant that he would be cheated out of his repose. For about three weeks, he was mad; recalling to himself all that he had done to possess Therese and realising that now that he possessed her, he could not even touch her without causing himself a considerable suffering.

An excess of anguish forced him to pull himself out of the situation. He reminded himself that he had married in order to drive away his nightmares by holding his wife close to him. One night, therefore, he took Therese forcibly into his arms, even at the risk of touching the ghost. He drew her to himself with violence.

They held each other in a close embrace. As their limbs touched, they felt as if they had been placed on a fire. They gave out a cry and pressed each other more, in order not to leave any space between them for the drowned man. But all the time they felt the touch of Camille's limbs, pressing against theirs. Their kisses were cruel. Therese found out the spot on Lau-

rent's neck where Camille had bit him. She pressed her lips there joyfully. That was the live spot. The evil lay there. The young woman understood this. She decided to burn out that evil with the fire of her own kisses. But it burned her lips. Laurent pushed her away violently giving out a cry of pain. He felt as if she was applying to his neck a red-hot iron. Therese tried again. She tasted a sort of bitter joy to place her lips on the spot where Camille's teeth had pierced. For a moment, she had the desire of biting her husband at that spot, to bite out a piece of his flesh, to cause a new and a deeper wound that would leave a mark to remind them of their past. But Laurent protected his neck from her kisses. He felt the sensation too painful. He pushed her back every time she extended her lips. They struggled thus in their embrace.

They remained in that close grasp, but their nerves were not soothed. While they were embracing each other, they were a prey to their fears and to their hallucinations. They imagined that the ghost was pulling them by their legs, and was shaking the bed violently.

They rested for a little. They were still feeling the revolt and the nervous repugnance. They decided that they would not be defeated. They again embraced, but were again obliged to release. Several times they tried to drive out their disgust. But every time their nerves were irritated and made them feel exasperated. Finally, a sharp pain separated them. They felt as if they had been thrown from a great height.

They were thrown back to their respective corners of the bed, burnt and mortified. They began to sob.

While sobbing, they seemed to hear the ghost laughing, triumphant, who slipped again under the blankets. They could not drive him away from the bed. They had been vanquished. Camille lay calmly between them, while Laurent sobbed helplessly. Therese trembled that in his triumph the ghost may not take her into his decomposed arms. For he was her legitimate master.

XXIV

The Thursday evenings resumed their gaiety, as the old Michaud had hoped, while working for the marriage between Therese and Laurent. After the death of Camille, these evenings had become rather dull. While the house was in mourning, the guests had feared that any week their invitations might be cancelled permanently. The thought that the doors of the shop might be closed against them had frightened Michaud and Grivet who had become accustomed to Madam Raquin's hospitality. They thought that the old mother and the young widow, feeling their loss, would clear out one fine morning either for Vernon or for some other place. In that case, the guests of the Thursday evenings would find themselves stranded on the pavements, not knowing what to do. They already imagined to themselves how they would be reminded of their interesting domino-parties whenever they would pass through that passage. While waiting for that unfortunate day, they enjoyed rather timidly the last of their good fortune. They entered the shop with an air of anxiety, fearing that it was their last visit. For more than a year, they had these fears. They dared not laugh heartily in the face of Madam Raquin's tears and Therese's moodiness. They never felt quite at home, as in Camille's time. They quietly stole in the dining-room. It was under such circumstances, that Michaud thought of a masterly stroke in the young widow's remarriage.

The Thursday following the marriage, Grivet and Michaud made a triumphant entry. They had conquered. The dining-room belonged to them again. They never feared that they would be dismissed now. They were happy. They continued their pleasantries one after the other. Seeing their attitude, one would have believed that a revolution had been accomplished. There was no trace of the memory of Camille. The dead husband, that spectre who troubled them, had been driven away by the living husband. The past was revived with their happiness. Laurent substituted Camille. All reason for sorrow had disappeared. The guests could laugh without causing chagrin to anybody. They even considered it to be their duty to laugh, in order to cheer the family who received them so well. Grivet and Michaud, who came under the pretext of consoling Madam Raquin for about eighteen months, could now put aside their hypocrisy and visit the shop openly to dose opposite to each other to the accompaniment of the noise of the clicking dominoes.

Every week brought its Thursday evening, and every Thursday evening united together on the table those ugly and grotesque heads that had at one time exasperated Therese. The young woman had talked of showing the door to those gentlemen. They irritated her greatly with their laughter, and their foolish remarks. But Laurent explained to her that it would be wrong to do so. They must try to make the present resemble the past as much as possible. They must continue their friendship for those policemen, those imbeciles, who protected them against all suspicions. Therese yielded. The

guests were received well. They had a long succession of happy and comfortable Thursday evenings before them.

That happened when the life of the couple was divided into two.

In the morning, when the day light drove away the fears of the night, Laurent dressed himself hurriedly. He was at his ease only when he entered the dining-room, and was seated before a big pot of coffee with milk, which had been prepared by Therese. Madam Raquin who had become so weak that she could no longer descend to the shop, watched him eat with maternal love. He swallowed the toasts and filled his stomach. In this way, he slowly reassured himself. After coffee, he took a small glass of cognac. That revived him completely. He bid good-bye to Madam Raquin and to Therese without the least embarrassment. Then he went to his office.

Spring arrived. The trees along the river were covered with leaves. The river flowed by with a caressing noise. The rays of the sun had a pleasant warmth. Laurent felt a new life in that fresh air. He inhaled deeply of that life-giving April air. He looked for the sun and waited to see its silver and gold reflection on the river. True, he would no more think of Camille. Sometimes, he mechanically watched the Morgue situated on the other side of the river. He thought of the drowned man, but only as a courageous man who would smile at his childish fears of the past. His stomach full, his face cooled, he found his tranquillity. He reached his office and spent the whole day there yawning with drowsiness, and waiting for the hour when

he could depart. He was no more like other employees. The sole idea that filled his head was when to submit his resignation. He thought of a new life of idleness. And that occupied him until the evening. The thought of the shop in the passage never troubled him at all. In the evening, having waited for the hour for departure since the morning, he left the office with regrets. He walked back along the river, troubled and anxious. He walked slowly. He was afraid to return to the shop. Camille's ghost awaited him there.

Therese showed the same feelings. So long as Laurent was not near her, she was easy enough. She had dismissed the maid-servant, saying that the shop and the rooms were dirty and in disorder. She would put everything in order. But the truth was that she needed exercise, to move her tired limbs. She turned out in the morning, cleaning the rooms, washing the pots, and doing everything that would have annoyed her formerly. She remained on her legs until the noon, looking after the house. She had no time to think of anything but the sweeping of the floor, or the washing of the plates. Then she went into the kitchen and prepared the lunch. At the table, Madam Raquin always grieved to see her get up to fetch the plates. She felt angry at the amount of work her niece had to perform. She grumbled. But Therese replied that it was necessary to economise. After the lunch, the young woman dressed and joined her aunt in the shop. There, she felt drowsy. She often slept, sitting behind the counter. She had just a few light naps which soothed her nerves. The thoughts of Camille left her. She enjoyed that little rest

like a person whose illness has left suddenly. Her spirits revived. She was satisfied. Without those few moments of rest, her system might have broken down. She received the strength necessary for going through the sufferings of the night.

She opened her eyes as soon as a customer entered. She served him or her, and returned behind the counter to fall back into a sort of peaceful torpor. In this way, she passed three or four hours of complete happiness. Occasionally, she threw a glance in the passage and noticed that it was raining. The few poor people who passed were wet. The passage was so ignoble that she often thought that nobody was likely to look for her or to trouble her in that wretched hole. Sometimes, feeling the moisture-laden, dirty and pungent atmosphere of the place, she imagined that she had been buried alive, that she was deep down in a vault where they leave the dead. That thought cheered her a little. She felt that she was in safety there.

Sometimes, Suzanne paid her a visit and remained near the counter the whole of the afternoon. Therese was now pleased with Oliver's wife, who had a weak face. She passed with her three or four hours, and then she went into the kitchen again and worked. She cooked Laurent's dinner in a feverish haste. As soon as her husband appeared at the door, she caught at her throat, and all her being was shaken anew with anguish.

Everyday, the experiences of the couple were practically the same. During the day,

when they were not face to face to each other, they enjoyed a few hours of happiness and repose. In the evening, since the moment they were together, a poignant malady surrounded them.

Therese and Laurent shuddered at the thought of going to their room. They kept up as late as possible. Madam Raquin, half inclined in a big chair between them, conversed in her placid voice. She talked about Vernon, always thinking about her son, but never mentioning him by name. She smiled at them. She made projects for their future. The lamp threw a pale light on her white face. Her voice became extraordinarily slow in that silence. By her side, the two murderers, quiet, motionless, appeared to listen to her with pleasure. In fact, they did not pay attention to what the good old woman was saying. They were simply happy at the noise that her words made to keep out from them their own unpleasant thoughts. They dared not look at each other. They both looked at Madam Raquin, in order to keep up their appearances. They never talked of going to bed. They could have remained there until the morning listening to Madam Raquin's conversation, if she had not herself expressed a desire to go to bed. Then alone did they leave the dining-room and enter their room in despair, as if they had been thrown into an abyss.

They preferred the Thursday evenings to these family evenings with Madam Raquin. When they found themselves alone with her, they could not deaden the sound of their fear that was tearing them. They felt the hour of retiring to bed approaching. If by chance they

happened to look towards the door of their bedroom, they felt a shiver pass through their body. The thought of that hour when they would be alone, became more and more cruel as the evening advanced. On Thursday evenings, on the other hand, they forgot each other's presence. They were interested in the light talk of the company. Even Therese waited for these receptions ardently. If Michaud or Grivet did not attend, she went to look for them, for she felt more calm when there was company in the house. The receptions therefore became particularly gay.

It was thus that once a week, Laurent and Therese could face each other without shivering.

Soon, however, another fear possessed them. Madam Raquin was being attacked by paralysis little by little. The day was not far when she would be unable to move from her chair. Soon, the poor woman gave up her conversations. They found themselves alone in the evenings. They could not escape a *tete-a-tete*. Their terrors started now from six o'clock instead of from the midnight. They became mad.

They tried their best to preserve Madam Raquin in good health which was so precious for themselves. They called in the doctors. They took particular care of her. They did not want that they should lose a third of their family. That would make the evenings unbearable. They did not want that the dining-room, that the whole house, should become cruel and sinister for them like their bed-room. Madam

Raquin was particularly touched by their attentions for her. She thanked them with tears in her eyes. After the death of her son, she had never expected such loving care during the last days of her life. The old age had been made comfortable for her by her children. She did not feel troubled by the paralysis that was gaining on her, day by day.

All this time, Therese and Laurent carried on their double existence. In each of them, there were two distinct beings ; one that was nervous, terrified and shivering ; and the other that was satisfied and forgetful, that lived in peace during the day. They lived a double life ; they suffered in anguish when they were alone, but they laughed happily when they were in company. Never did their faces give out in public the least sign of the suffering which separated them from each other. They looked calm and happy. Instinctively, they hid their troubles from others.

Nobody could have suspected from their tranquil appearance during the day that they were tortured the whole night by hallucinations. To others, they appeared to be a particularly happy couple, blessed by God. Grivet called them gallantly "Turtle-Doves". When he noticed the dark rings around their eyes due to sleeplessness, he enquired lightly when the baptism will take place. Everybody laughed at this. Laurent and Therese became pale. Soon, however, they became used to the pleasantries of the old man.

"Are they happy ?" Michaud asked himself often. "They never talk. But they don't think

of it. I bet, they devour each other with caresses when we are not there."

Such was the opinion of everybody in the company. Laurent and Therese were regarded as an ideal couple. Everybody in the passage of the Pont-Neuf praised them. They alone knew that Camille's ghost separated them from each other. They alone knew how the placid looks on their faces during the day would be changed into horrible contortions of pain during the night.

XXV

Four months afterwards, Laurent thought of cashing in the benefits that were promised to him on his marriage. He would have left his wife and run away before Camille's ghost three days after the bridal night, if his interests had not tied him to the shop in the passage. He accepted those nights of terror, he suffered the anguish that almost choked him, only because he did not want to lose the profits accruing from his crime. He thought that by leaving Therese, he would once more fall into misery, he would be forced to retain his post in the office. But by living with her, on the contrary, he was guaranteed a comfortable living without doing anything, by the profits derived from the forty-thousand francs transferred by Madam Raquin in his wife's name. He believed that he could save himself with the forty-thousand francs, only if he could realise the money. But on Michaud's advise the old woman had inserted a clause in the contract safeguarding her niece's interests. Laurent was thus attached to Therese by powerful interests. While wishing to escape from the terror of those atrocious nights, he also desired to live idly, to be well-nourished, to be well clothed, to have enough money in his pockets to satisfy his caprices. It was at this price alone, that he consented to sleep with the ghost of the drowned man.

One evening, he announced to Madam Raquin and his wife that he had submitted his resignation at the office. Therese became full of

anxiety. He hastened to add, however that he was going to rent a studio where he will set up as a painter. He dwelt long on the drawbacks of his post in the office, and on the good prospects that art opened to him, now that he had a little money with which he could start with every hope of success. He wished to find out if he was not capable of doing something big. The speech that he delivered on that project simply hid his desire to take to the studio life. Therese, with her lips pressed, did not reply. She knew that Laurent would fritter away the little fortune that assured her liberty. When her husband pressed her with further questions in order to get her consent, she made a few dry remarks. She gave him to understand that if he left the office, he would earn nothing and would be a charge to her entirely. As she was speaking, Laurent regarded her with a pointed gaze which terrified her and choked the words of her disapproval in her throat. She seemed to read in the eyes of her accomplice the threat, "If you do not agree to my plans, I shall tell everything." She was confused. Then Madam Raquin cried out that the proposal of her dear son was quite just. He must be given the money needed to make him a man of talent. The good old woman pampered Laurent as she had pampered Camille. She was completely won over by the caressing tone of the young man. She sided with him and was always of his opinion.

It was finally decided that the artist would rent a studio and should draw one hundred francs per month from the family for the various expenses of the studio. The family

budget was readjusted. It was settled that the income from the shop should meet the daily expenses and the rent, both of the shop and the apartment in which they lived. In this way, it would not be necessary to draw upon their capital. Therese was pacified a little. She made her husband promise, however, that he would never exceed his allowance of one hundred francs per month. Besides, she told herself that Laurent could not draw upon the forty thousand francs without getting her signature. She determined not to sign any paper for that purpose.

On the following day, Laurent rented a small studio, which he had coveted for about a month, in the lower part of the Rue Mazarine. He did not wish to leave his office without having a quiet refuge where he could pass his days in peace, far from Therese. At the end of a fortnight, he took leave of his colleagues at the office. Grivet was stupefied at his departure. "A young man," he said, "who had such a bright future before him! A young man who had attained the post that had taken him twenty years to attain." Laurent surprised him still more when he said that he was going to set up as a painter.

Finally, the artist installed himself in his studio. That studio was a square loft about five or six metres on each side. The roof inclined suddenly and was supported on a large window which let in a strong white light on to the floor and to the walls. The noise of the street did not reach it at that height. Laurent furnished that room somehow. He brought two chairs, one table which he placed against the

wall so that it may not fall, and an old side board. He also brought the box of colours and the old easel. The only luxury in that room was a big divan that he bought for thirty francs at a second hand shop.

For a fortnight, he remained without even touching his brushes. He reached the studio at about eight or nine in the morning. He smoked while lying on the divan, and awaited noon. He was happy to find that there were still several hours of day-light before him. At noon, he went out to take his lunch. Then he returned in order to be alone, not to see the pale face of Therese. Then he had his afternoon nap. He enjoyed until the evening. His studio was for him a peaceful place where he need not tremble. One day, his wife expressed a desire to see his studio. He refused. But as she went there, in spite of his refusal, and knocked at the door, he did not admit her. In the evening, he told her that he was not at his studio, but was at the Louvre museum. He was afraid that Therese might introduce Camille's ghost into the studio with her.

Inactivity began to bore him now. He purchased some colours and a canvas. He set himself to work. Not having enough money to employ the models, he decided to paint a fantasy. He sketched a human head. He worked only for two or three hours in the morning, and spent his afternoon wandering here and there, either in Paris or in the suburbs. It was in one of his wanderings that he came across near the Institute his old college friend, who had now achieved a great success in his art.

"Hullo ! It is you," cried the artist, "Oh, my poor Laurent. I could never have recognised you. You have become thin."

"I have married," Laurent replied in an embarrassed tone.

"Married ? You ? It does not astonish me to see you so bored. What do you do now ?"

"I have rented a small studio. I paint a little in the mornings."

Laurent described his marriage in a few words. Then, in a feverish voice, he explained his future plans. His friend regarded him with a surprised look which troubled him. The truth was that the artist did not find in Therese's husband that fat and vulgar boy that he used to know. It appeared to him that Laurent had adopted the modes of rich people. His face was thin, and had the pallor common in people of good taste. His entire body looked more dignified and more supple than before. "But you have become handsome," cried the artist, "you look like an ambassador of the latest type. Which school have you joined ?" The scrutiny to which he subjected Laurent, greatly inconvenienced him. He hazarded in a brusque manner, "will you step in to my studio for a few minutes ?"

"With pleasure," agreed the artist.

The artist, disregarding the change that had come over Laurent, was desirous of visiting the studio of his old comrade. Certainly, he did not ascend the five stories to his studio to see Laurent's new work which was sure to nauseate him. His only object was to satisfy his curiosity.

When he reached the studio and threw a glance on the canvas hung across the walls, his astonishment increased. There were five studies, two heads of women and three of men, painted with veritable energy. The artist approached Laurent with stupefaction and asked :

"Did you paint these ?"

"Yes," replied Laurent, "these are the sketches that will serve me for a bigger work that I am planning."

"Come, come. No bluffing. Are you really the author of these pieces ?"

"Yes. Why not ?"

The artist hesitated a reply, "Because that is the work of an artist, and you were never anything more than an awkward mason."

He remained before those studies for a long time. It was true that the studies were wrong, but they had a strangeness, a powerful character which hinted at a well-developed artistic sense. When he finished the examination of the canvas, he turned towards Laurent.

"Frankly, I never thought you capable of painting these. Where the devil, did you learn it ? It is not an ordinary thing," he said.

He considered Laurent whose voice seemed sweeter, and whose movements had a certain amount of elegance. He did not know about the terrible shocks that had changed that man, that had developed in him the nerves of a woman, a woman's sharp and delicate sensations.

No doubt, the organism of Camille's murderer had been subjected to a strange phenomenon.

Laurent had perhaps developed an artistic sense in the same way in which he developed a sense of fear. During the life of terror that he led, his thoughts made him delirious. He saw strange creations passing before him in his reveries. His friend did not attempt to discover how the artist was born. He went away surprised. Before leaving, he again examined the sketches and said to Laurent:

"I have only one word of criticism to offer. It is that all your studies have the air of a family. All these five heads resemble one another. The women themselves are disguised as men. You follow me? If you desire to complete a picture with these sketches, it is necessary to change some of their physiognomy." He went out of the studio and added on the landing, laughing, "my dear friend, I was pleased to see you again. I am going to believe in miracles now."

He went away. Laurent returned to the studio, greatly excited. When his friend had observed that all the faces appeared to belong to the same family, he had turned suddenly to hide his confusion. He had been already struck by the resemblance. He went slowly to the canvas. As he contemplated it, passing from one face to the other, cold perspiration stood on his spine.

"He is right," he murmured, "they all resemble. They resemble Camille."

He fell back, and seated himself on the divan, without being able to take off his eyes from the canvas. The first face was that of old age, with long white beard. Under that white beard

Laurent noticed Camille's thin chin. The second face represented a young blond woman. That woman regarded him with the blue eyes of the victim. The other three figures had also some resemblance or the other with the drowned man. It appeared that Camille had been painted as an old man, and as a young girl, taking the disguise that pleased the painter, but always maintaining his own characteristic physiognomy. There was another point of resemblance. All the faces looked terrified and suffering. They all gave out the same sentiment of horror. That resemblance recalled to Laurent's mind the convulsed face of the drowned man.

Laurent thought that he had looked at the dead body of Camille at the Morgue too much. His image seemed to be deeply engraved on his mind. But now his hand was mechanically tracing the outlines of the atrocious face whose memory followed him everywhere.

Slowly, as he turned on the divan, he imagined the faces on the canvas to be animated. He had now five Camilles before him, five Camilles whom his own fingers had created, and who, strangely enough, adopted any age and any sex. He got up. He tore the canvas to pieces and threw it outside. He said to himself that he would die of fear if he himself peopled his studio with the portraits of his victim.

A strange fear took hold of him. He could now sketch no other head but that of the drowned man. He wanted to find out at once if he was the master of his own hand. He set another piece of canvas on the easel. He attempted a figure. The figure was that of Camille. Laurent effaced it brusquely, and tried another.

For one full hour he fought against the fatality which pushed his fingers. Every new attempt produced the face of the drowned man.

Laurent was filled with a secret rage. He tore the canvas with a violent blow.

He dared not draw again, for fear of resuscitating his victim. If he wished to live in peace in his studio, he must give up all attempt at painting. The thought that he had no control over his fingers, that they reproduced Camille's portrait unconsciously, made him look at his hand with terror. It appeared as if the hand did not belong to him any longer.

XXVI

The crisis that had been threatening Madam Raquin for some time now appeared. The paralysis that had attacked her limbs some months ago now spread to her whole body. One evening, as she was dragging herself painfully between Therese and Laurent, she stopped in the middle of a sentence. She felt that she was being strangled. When she wanted to cry, to call for help, she could not utter a word. Her tongue became like stone. Her hands and feet became rigid. She lost her speech and became motionless.

Therese and Laurent got up, frightened by that blow which doubled the old woman up in less than five seconds. As she fixed her eyes on them, they pressed her with questions to know the cause of her suffering. She could not reply. She continued to gaze at them with profound anguish. They now realised that they had before them only a corpse, a corpse that was only half-dead and half-alive; a corpse that could hear and see, but could not talk. The crisis threw them into despair. At heart, they little understood the suffering of a paralytic. But they cried at their own lot. Henceforth, they two will be forced to live together in an eternal solitude.

From that day on, their life became intolerable. They spent the cruel evenings in the presence of the old cripple who could no more make them forget their own misery by her conversation. She lay on a chair like a bundle,

like an article. They were lonely, sitting embarrassed and restless at the two ends of the table. That corpse could no more separate them. At times, they forgot her. They confused her with the furniture. The terror of the night then took hold of them. Like the sleeping room, the dining-room now became for them a terrible place where Camille's ghost haunted them. Their sufferings were thus increased by four or five hours everyday. They began to shiver as soon as the twilight fell. They lowered the lampshade, so that they may not see each other. They tried to believe that Madam Raquin would speak and make them feel her presence. They kept her near them, for her eyes were still alive. They always noticed some sign of life, some movement and brightness in them.

They always placed the old cripple in the bright light of the lamp, so that her face could be well-lighted before them. That mute and pale face was an unbearable sight for anybody, except for them. They rested their looks on it with a veritable joy. That face was like the mask of death in the middle of which there stood two living eyes. When Madam Raquin felt sleepy and lowered her eye-lids, that face became really the face of a corpse. Therese and Laurent then made some noise so that the cripple opened her eyes, and regarded them. They obliged her to keep awake in this way.

They considered her to be a diversion for them which saved them from their frightful dreams. Since the time of her infirmity, it became necessary to take care of her as a child. The attention that they gave to her helped them in shaking off their own thoughts. In the morning, Laurent lifted her and placed her in her

chair. In the evening, he put her again to bed. She was still rather heavy. It needed all his strength to carry her gently in his arms. He had also to move the chair in which she lay. Therese attended to the rest. She dressed the old woman. She fed her. She tried to understand what she needed. For a few days, Madam Raquin was able to use her hands. She used to write on a slate what she needed. Then her hands also became useless. It became impossible for her to hold the pencil. From that time on, she had no other means but the language of the eyes. The young woman gave all her attention to the invalid. In this way she found some employment for her body and her mind which did her considerable good.

In order not to face each other, the husband and wife kept on moving the invalid's chair in the dining-room. They kept it between them as if it was necessary for their very existence. When the old cripple desired to be taken to her room, they feigned that they did not understand her. It was not safe for their own peace of mind that the two of them should be left together. They felt that the old cripple had no right to live a separate life. At eight in the morning, Laurent went to his studio. Therese descended to the shop; and the invalid remained alone in the dining-room until noon. Then, after lunch, again she was left alone until six in the evening. During the day, her niece often came up and circled round her chair to make sure that she did not require anything. The friends of the family bestowed unbounded praise on Therese and Laurent for the attention they gave to the invalid. It exalted them considerably in their eyes.

The receptions of the Thursday evenings continued as usual. The invalid joined them as in the past. They drew her chair near the table. From eight o'clock to eleven o'clock, she kept her eyes open. She gazed at the guests turn by turn with penetrating eyes. The first time, old Michaud and Grivet were a little embarrassed in the presence of the corpse of their old friend. They did not know what expressions to give to their countenances. At heart they did not feel much for the patient. They were therefore at a loss to know how exactly to sympathise with her. Should they talk to that dead face? Should they ignore it altogether? By and by, they adopted the attitude as if nothing had happened to Madam Raquin. They talked to her; themselves answering their questions. They laughed for her and for themselves, never allowing themselves to be disconcerted by the rigid expression on her face. It was a strange spectacle. These men were talking to a statue, in the same way in which little children talk to their dolls. The cripple remained rigid and mute before them. But they went on chattering and gesticulating, in an animated discussion with her. Michaud and Grivet seemed greatly pleased with the attitude they had adopted. They believed this was politeness. They saved themselves in this way from the awkwardness of offering the usual condolences. They thought that Madam Raquin must feel flattered on being treated as the most powerful person in the company. In future, they enjoyed themselves in her presence without the least scruple.

Grivet had a mania. He affirmed that he could understand Madam Raquin perfectly. As

soon as he looked at Madam Raquin, he said that he understood what she desired. But at every attempt, he proved to be wrong. Often, he interrupted the game of dominoes. He looked at the invalid, whose eyes were painfully following the game, and declared that she wanted such and such thing. They verified it. But it was found that either Madam Raquin wanted nothing, or that she needed something different. This did not put Grivet to discomfiture, who said victoriously, "I told you so."

It was a different affair when the invalid gave clear indications that she needed something. Therese, Laurent and the guests, turn by turn, named the things she may be desiring. On such occasions Grivet mentioned the things haphazardly, as they came to his mind. He always offered the thing that was quite opposite to what Madam Raquin desired.

"I can read into her eyes, as if in a book. See. She tells me that I am always right....Isn't it, my dear Madam? Yes. Yes."

It was not easy to find out what the invalid wanted. Therese alone seemed to know it. She communicated easily with the old woman's intelligence that was now buried under a dead flesh. What was passing in the mind of that miserable creature who looked at this life without being able to take part in it? She saw, she heard, and doubtlessly, she reasoned. But she could not move, she did not have the voice to express the thoughts that she must be feeling. Perhaps her thoughts were choking her. But she could not raise her hand, or open her mouth even when a single movement, a single word from her might have decided the destiny of

the world. Her spirit was like the spirit of those who have been put into a shroud by mistake and buried in their grave, several feet under the ground, but who regain consciousness in their grave. They cry and debate with themselves, while the people pass by without hearing their atrocious lamentations.

Laurent looked at Madam Raquin often, with his lips shut tight, his hands on his knees, and his eyes fixed at those of the invalid. He said to himself then :

"Who knows what she is thinking about ? A cruel drama must be taking place in the depths of this corpse."

Laurent was wrong. Madam Raquin was happy. She was happy at the attention and affection bestowed on her by her two children. She had always dreamed of ending her days in this way, slowly and in the midst of love and devotion. It is true that she must have wished to have retained her speech so that she could thank her friends who helped her to die in peace. But she seemed to have accepted her fate without revolt. The retired and a hard life that she had always led, and her quiet temperament, aided her in bearing the sufferings caused by the loss of speech and mobility. She had again become a child. She passed her days without annoyance, thinking of the past. She even enjoyed lying discreetly in the chair like small child.

Everyday her eyes became kinder and more penetrating. She used her eyes as one uses the hand, or the mouth for demanding and thanking. She supplicated with her eyes in a strange and a charming manner, in default of her other

organs which had failed her. She smiled with her eyes, as her lips were now inert. Nothing was more characteristic than her eyes when they smiled. When Laurent took her in her arms, every morning and evening, she thanked him with her eyes full of tenderness.

She lived in this way for several weeks, waiting to die. She believed that she had had her full share of suffering in this world. She was mistaken. For one evening she received a frightful shock.

Therese and Laurent had placed her between them in full light. She now lived only to separate them and thus to protect them from their anguish. When they had forgot that she was there, they looked at each other. Immediately, they were possessed by their madness. They saw Camille and tried to drive him away. They began to speak and used words, in spite of them, which made everything clear to Madam Raquin. Laurent had a sort of a fit during which he talked as in a dream. Suddenly, the invalid understood all.

Her face contracted frightfully, and she received such a shock that Therese believed that she would jump and cry. Then she relapsed into the iron-like rigidity. It was such a severe shock that it seemed to galvanise the whole corpse. The senses revived for a time, but disappeared again. Her eyes which were ordinarily so calm, now became hard and dark, like two pieces of metal.

Never was any one so rudely shaken by despair. The sinister truth seemed to burn the eyes of the cripple, and entered into her heart

with a terrible shock. If she could stand up and give out the cry of horror that rose to her throat, curse the assassins of her son, she would have suffered less. But having heard all, having understood all, she must remain motionless and speechless, must keep within herself her terrible pain. It appeared to her as if Therese and Laurent had tied her to her chair so that she might not jump out. It appeared to her that they took an atrocious pleasure in repeating to her, "We killed Camille," having gagged her so that she could not even sob. Terror and anguish raced madly in her body without finding an expression. She made superhuman efforts to lift the weight that seemed to crush her; to free her throat and give vent to the flood of her despair. Vainly she tried to strain her remaining energy, but she felt her cold tongue sticking against her palate. She could not snatch herself from death. The helplessness of her body made her rigid. Her sensations resembled those of a person who had fallen in lethargy, but who was hearing the noise of the sand that was being poured on his head as he was being buried alive.

The ravages to her heart were still more terrible. She felt within her a rolling that hurt her. Her entire life had become desolate. All her tenderness, all her noble sentiments, and all her devotion received a rude shock. They had been thrown down at her feet. She had led a life full of affection and kindness. But now, just when she was about to carry to her grave a memory of her last happy moments, she received this shock. Her heart cried to her that everything is a lie, that everything is a crime. The tearing of the curtain

showed to her that behind that love and friendship in which she believed, there was a fearful spectacle of blood and shame. If she could have uttered a blasphemy, she would have injured God. God had deceived her for more than sixteen years. He had amused Himself by the false pictures of peaceful joy. She had behaved like a child. She had believed foolishly in a thousand and one silly lies. She did not notice the reality which was based on blood and passion. God has been wicked. He should have made her see the truth at once, or let her die with her ignorance of the real facts. Now, she could die only repudiating her faith in love, friendship, and devotion. There is nothing but murder and passion.

Eh? What? Camille died under the blows from Therese and Laurent? They planned the crime in the shame of adultery! For Madam Raquin there was such an abyss in that thought she could neither reason out nor grasp the details of the tragedy clearly. She only felt the sensation of a terrible fall. She felt that she was falling down a narrow and dark hole. She said to herself, "I am going to be broken to pieces when I strike the bottom."

After the first shock, the monstrosity of the crime appeared to her improbable. As the conviction of adultery and murder became established to her mind by the little circumstances in the past that she could not explain properly, she felt that she would go mad. Therese and Laurent had murdered Camille; Therese, whom she had brought up, Laurent, whom she had treated like a devoted and tender mother! This circled into her head like a huge torture

wheel with a deafening noise. She imagined the worst possible details of an ignoble hypothesis. She wished she had died before being aware of such an atrocious irony. A single thought now repeated to herself mechanically, "It is my children who killed my son." She found no other way of expressing her despair.

In the sudden change of her heart she thought in a frenzy, but found nothing. All the kindness of her heart was driven away. She thought only of vengeance now. She felt that in her dying flesh a new person was being born; merciless and cruel, who wished to murder the assassins of her son.

As she lay under the painful restraint of her paralysis, she realised her inability to jump and throw herself on the throats of Therese and Laurent, whom she would have liked to strangle to death. She therefore resigned herself to silence and immobility. Large tears fell slowly from her eyes. Nothing was so heart-rending as that silent and motionless despair. Those tears that rolled down, one by one, on her inert face in which only the eyes seemed to sob, presented a very painful sight.

Therese was overwhelmed by a frightful pity.

"We must go to bed," she said to Laurent pointing out her aunt.

Laurent hastened to move the invalid to her room. Then he bent down to lift Madam Raquin in his arms. At that moment, she wished that she had the strength to stand on her own legs. She made a supreme effort. God forbid that Laurent should take her against his chest. She

wished that a sudden calamity may strike him the moment he touched her. But she received no strength and the heavens seemed to reserve their thunderbolt. She remained afflicted and motionless like a bundle of linen. She was lifted and carried by the assassin. Her head rolled down on Laurent's shoulder. She regarded him with horror.

"Look at me as much as you like," he murmured, "your eyes are not going to eat me."

And he threw her down brutally on the bed. She fell down there and lost consciousness. Her last thoughts were of terror and disgust.

XXVII

This frightful crisis alone had made the couple to talk to each other. None of them was cruel by nature. They would have avoided the revelation of murder on grounds of humanity, even if their security itself had not depended on their keeping quiet.

On the following Thursday, they were uncommonly disturbed. In the morning, Therese asked Laurent if it was advisable to bring the invalid into the dining-room in the evening. She knew all and she may warn the others.

"Bah !" replied Laurent, "it is impossible for her to move even the little finger. How do you think she can talk ?"

"She may find some means," Therese replied, "since that evening I can read an unappeasable wrath in her eyes."

"No. Don't you see ? The doctor told me that she is almost finished. If she were to talk for the last time, she would only croak in her agony. She cannot live for long. It is foolish to burden our conscience by preventing her from the evening receptions."

Therese shuddered.

"You do not understand me," she said, "Oh ! You are right. We have already enough blood on our hands. But I wanted to suggest to you that we could leave my aunt in her room and pretend that she was unwell, or that she was asleep."

"That is it," Laurent said, "and that imbecile Michaud would quietly slip into her room to see how her old friend was doing. That will be a nice way of losing ourselves."

He hesitated. He wished to appear to be quiet. But his anxiety made him talk.

"It is better to await the events," he continued, "those old gentlemen are fools like birds. Certainly they cannot hear the mute despair of the old woman. They will never suspect the thing, for they are far from the truth. You will see that everything goes right."

In the evening, when the guests arrived, Madam Raquin occupied her usual place on the table. Therese and Laurent pretended that they were in good humour. But they awaited with fear the new developments which were bound to occur. They lowered the lamp-shade so that only the floor was lighted brightly.

The guests continued the light conversation which always preceded the play of dominoes. Grivet and Michaud did not miss to address their usual questions about the health of the invalid; questions to which they themselves replied. After that, the whole company plunged itself into the play with great joy.

Since she had learnt the horrible truth, Madam Raquin had been waiting anxiously for that evening. She had united all her energy to denounce the culprits. She was doubtful until the last moment, that she might not be taken to the reception. She thought that Laurent might cause her to disappear, might kill her; or

at least shut her up in the room. When she found herself in the presence of the guests, she felt a great joy in thinking that she was about to avenge the death of her son. Knowing that her tongue was useless, she tried to find a new language to communicate her thoughts. By an astonishing will power, she somehow moved her right hand which lay inert on her knee. By and by she extended it to a leg of the table that was nearest to her, and succeeded in placing it on the table cloth. She moved her fingers feebly as if to attract the attention.

When the players saw the white hand of the invalid, they were greatly surprised. Grivet stopped as his hand was raised to play a double-six. Since the attack of paralysis, the invalid had never moved her hands.

"Hullo! What is this, Therese?" cried Michaud, "look. Madam Raquin is moving her fingers. No doubt, she wants something."

Therese could not utter a single word. She and Laurent, both had noticed the invalid's efforts. She saw her aunt's hand in the growing light of the lamp as if it was going to speak and have its revenge. The two murderers waited breathlessly.

"My God! Yes," said Grivet, "she desires something. Oh! We understand each other well. She wants to join us in our play. Isn't it, dear lady?"

Madam Raquin made a violent sign of denial. She extended one finger and folded the others with infinite pain, and attempted to trace the letters on the table. She had not yet finished

any letter, when Grivet jumped up in great triumph :

"I understand her. She says that I did well to play the double-six."

Madam Raquin threw a terrible glance at him and continued to write the word that she wanted. But every now and then Grivet interrupted her, declaring that he understood her. Michaud however, compelled him to be quiet.

"What a devil you are ! Let Madam Raquin speak," he said, "go on. Speak. My old friend."

And he looked at the table cloth. But the invalid's hand was tired. After several attempts it again commenced a word, but it spread to the right and the left. Michaud and Olivier bent over it, but could not make it out. The invalid was therefore forced always to begin the first word again and again.

"Well," Olivier cried all of a sudden, "I read this time. She has written your name, Therese. See. '*Therese and...*' Continue, Madam."

Therese gave a cry of pain. She saw her aunt's fingers gliding on the table cloth. It seemed to her that the fingers were writing her name and about the crime in letters of fire. Laurent rose violently, asking himself whether he should not break the invalid's arm. He believed that everything was lost. He already felt the punishment weighing heavily on him, in seeing that hand revive in order to reveal the murder of Camille.

Madam Raquin continued to write, though more and more hesitatingly.

"It is perfect. I can read quite well," replied Olivier after a few seconds, looking at the couple, "your aunt writes your names. *'Therese and Laurent...'* "

The old woman affirmed it by her signs, and threw glances at the two murderers that seemed to hurt them. Then she began again, but her fingers were rigid now. Her will power seemed to leave her. She felt the attack of paralysis spreading slowly all along her arm. She tried to hasten. She added another word.

The old Michaud read it in a loud voice, "*Therese and Laurent have...*"

Olivier demanded, "What have they done?"

The murderers were seized with a terror. They were on the point of completing the phrase loudly. They contemplated the revengeful hand with fixed and troubled eyes. But suddenly that hand was struck by convulsion and lay flat on the table. It slipped and lay on the invalid's knee, like a lifeless mass of flesh. Paralysis had returned and had checked the punishment. Michaud and Olivier settled down again with disappointment, while Therese and Laurent felt a great relief.

Grivet was annoyed at his inability to guess the correct words. He thought that it was time that he should re-establish his reputation of infallibility and complete the unfinished phrase of Madam Raquin. As they were trying to understand the sense of the words, he said :

"It is quite clear. I can see the whole phrase in Madam Raquin's eyes. It is not necessary that she should write it on the table. A single glance from her suffices for me. She had wished to say, 'Therese and Laurent have looked after me well.' "

Grivet applauded himself on his imagination. For everybody seemed to be of the same opinion. The guests congratulated the couple who had proved to be so good to the old woman.

"It is certain," Michaud said gravely, "that Madam Raquin wished to thank them for the tender attention which they give her. This is an honour to the whole family."

And he added while taking up the dominoes again,

"Let us continue our game. Where were we? Grivet had just played his double-six, I believe."

Grivet placed the double-six. The party continued stupidly and monotonously.

The invalid looked at her hand. She was thrown into the greatest depths of despair. Her hand had deceived her. She felt it like the weight of lead now. Never again will she be able to raise it. God did not wish that Camille's murder should be avenged. She closed her eyes and felt herself helpless. She wished to believe that she was already in her tomb.



XXVIII

For about two months Therese and Laurent quarrelled with each other as a result of the anguish that they felt on their marriage. They just tolerated each other. Then they began to hate each other. Finally, they regarded each other with angry looks that were full of dangerous threats.

Hate had forced itself between them. There was a time when they had loved each other like brutes; with a passion; with all their life. Then, in the midst of their weakness that assailed them after the murder, their love became one of fear. They felt their kisses as a physical torture. But today, under the sufferings that marriage had brought; sufferings that their life in common had imposed on them, they revolted against each other, and kept away from each other.

That was a terrible hate, with atrocious outbursts. They knew well that they could not bear the company of each other. They said to themselves that they could have a happy and peaceful existence only if they were not forced to spend all their time face to face with each other. When they were together, each felt that there was an enormous weight that choked him or her. Each tried to remove that weight, to annihilate it. They bit their lips, and violent thoughts raced in their clear eyes. They wished to devour each other.

At bottom, a strange thought agitated them. They were annoyed at their crime. They despaired of ever having a peaceful life. It was

this thought that was the cause of all their anger and all their hatred. They felt that the mischief had been done and there was no remedy against it. They knew that they would suffer until their death, because of the murder of Camille. This thought of a perpetual suffering exasperated them. Not knowing what to do about it, they detested themselves.

They did not wish to believe it openly that their marriage was the inevitable punishment for the murder. They refused to listen to their inner voice which told them the truth about their life. And yet, in their moments of crisis which shook them, each read the thoughts of the other quite neatly. They noticed the madness of their egoism that had forced them to commit the murder in order to be able to satisfy their desires. They realised that they got nothing out of the murder, except a desolate and an intolerable existence. They remembered the past. They knew that they were deceived in their hope of leading a luxurious and a peaceful life. They got nothing but remorse out of it. Only if they could embrace each other in peace and live joyfully, they would never have bothered themselves about Camille. They would have thrived on their crime. But their bodies revolted and refused the marriage. They asked themselves with terror where all this fright and disgust was going to lead them. They saw before them nothing but a painful future. The prospect before them was sinister.

So, like two enemies who should have endeared themselves to each other, but who made vain efforts to sustain themselves through that forced embarrassment, they controlled their

muscles and their nerves. They became red, but could not bring themselves to attack each other. Then, realising that they would never be able to overcome the restraint between them, feeling that any moment they may cut off their troubles, they reproached each other. They tried to end their sufferings as soon as possible. They thought of the blows or cuts that they would give each other. Each raised the cries of accusation against the other.

Every evening they started the quarrel. The murderers wanted to have an opportunity to relieve their strained nerves. They watched each other, they examined each other by their looks and took a pleasure in causing pain to the other. In this way they lived in a continuous irritation. They could not put up with a single word, a single move, a single look from the other without running into a rage. Their whole being was ready to come to blows. Even the slightest impatience, the least contradiction between them suddenly became a serious thing for them. A mere trifle would raise a storm between them that would last until the next morning. A hot plate, an open window, a little contradiction, a simple remark was enough to make them fly into a rage. And always they were up against the drowned man. They always came to reproach each other for the drowning at Saint-Ouen. They saw red. They flew into a rage. Atrocious scenes followed. There were blows ; there were shameful cries and brutalities. These scenes usually took place after the dinner. They shut themselves up into the dining-room so that nobody should hear them. There, in that damp-room where the lamp seemed to reflect

their paleness, they could devour each other at their ease. In the midst of that silence and tranquillity of air their voices became terrifying. They did not stop until they were completely exhausted. Then only they could get a few hours' repose. Their quarrel became a necessity for them. It became for them a means of bringing them sleep which soothed their nerves a little.

Madame Raquin heard them. She was there all the time, in her chair, with the hands hanging on the knees, head erect and the face mute. She heard all, but her dead flesh had no shiver. Her eyes were fixed at the murderers with pointedness. Her martyrdom became cruel. In this way she learnt all the details that had preceded and followed the murder of her son. By and by, she learnt everything about the meanness and the crime of those whom she had called her 'dear children.'

The quarrels between the couple made her conversant with all the circumstances connected with the horrible crime. Every evening she learnt some new detail. Always the frightful story unfolded itself before her. It appeared to her that she was lost in a horrible dream which had no end. The first confession of the crime had been a brutal shock to her, but she was subjected to fresh and terrible shocks by the little details about the tragedy that the couple let slip in their conversation. These details made the crime to appear in its most sinister aspect. Once every evening, that unfortunate mother listened to the recital of the assassination of her son, and each day that recital became more horrible, and more cruel.

Then, Therese was taken by remorse in the presence of that mute face on which big tears ran down silently. She pointed to her aunt and made a sign to Laurent by her looks to keep quiet.

"Leave her alone," Laurent cried with brutality, "you know well that she cannot betray us. Am I happier than she is? We have her money. I need not worry myself about her."

And the quarrel proceeded bitterly on. Neither Therese nor Laurent dared to yield to the thoughts of pity that often assailed them for shutting the paralytic up in her own room so as to save her from the cruel recital of their crime. They were afraid that they would attack each other, if that half-living body was not there between them. Their pity stopped before their cowardice. They heaped unutterable sufferings on Madam Raquin, for they needed her presence to protect them against their own hallucinations.

All their dispute started from the same point. As soon as Camille's name was uttered, each started accusing the other for having murdered that man. It was such a dreadful shock.

One evening, while at dinner, Laurent, who was always on the look out for a pretext to quarrel, found that the water in the jug was tepid. He declared that tepid water always gave him a nausea. He wanted cold water.

"I could not get it from ice," Therese replied dryly.

"Very well. I will not drink it," said Laurent.

"That water is excellent."

"It is tepid and has a muddy taste. One can say that it is the river water."

Therese repeated : "River water !" And she broke out into sobs. She guessed Laurent's thoughts.

"Why are you crying ?" asked Laurent, who knew the answer and therefore paled.

"I cry...I cry..." replied the young woman, "because...you know it very well. Oh. My God. My God. It is You who killed him."

"You lie," cried the murderer with a vehemence, "confess that you are lying. If I threw him into the Seine, it was you who encouraged me to commit the murder."

"I ? I ?"

"Yes. You ! Do not act the ignorant. Do not oblige me to resort to force to make you confess the truth. I want that you should confess your crime, that you should admit your own part in the assassination. That will pacify me and soothe me."

"But it was not I who drowned Camille."

"Yes. Thousand times yes. It was you ! Oh ! You feign astonishment and forget it ! Listen. I am going to refresh your memory."

He got up from the table, bent towards the young woman, and, with his face purple with anger, shouted at her.

"You were on the river-bank. You remember that. And I told you in a low voice, 'I am

going to throw him into the river.' Then, you accepted it. You entered into the boat....You see quite well that you assisted me in murdering him."

"It is not true....I was mad. I do not know what I did, but I never wished to kill him. You alone committed the crime."

This denial tortured Laurent. As he had said, the idea of an accomplice soothed him. He could have tried, if he dared, to prove that the whole responsibility of the crime rested with Therese. He wanted to battle with the young woman to make her confess that it was she who was the greater culprit.

He began to pace the room, crying deliriously, and followed by Madam Raquin's regards.

"Oh, miserable ! Miserable !" he cried in a choking voice, "she wants me to go mad. Did you not go to my room one evening like a prostitute ? Did you not suggest to me to take you away from your husband ? Did you not tell me that he displeased you, that he looked like a sick child ? Did I think of all this ? Was I a rogue ? I led a peaceful life. I was an honest man, hurting nobody, not even a fly."

"It was you who killed Camille," repeated Therese with some obstinacy that made Laurent lose his head.

"No. It was you. I tell you it was you," he replied with some heat, "look here ! Do not exasperate me. It may end badly. You fool ! You do not seem to remember anything. You gave yourself up to me like a girl there,

in your husband's room. You made me experience the voluptuousness that made me mad. Confess that you had planned everything beforehand; that you hated Camille, and that you had wished to kill him for a long time. No doubt, you took me as your lover, so that I might come into clash with him and kill him."

"That is not true. What you say is monstrous. You have no right to reproach me for my weakness. I can say, like you, that before I knew you I was an honest woman who had never hurt any one. If I made you go mad, you made me mad in a greater degree. Let us not quarrel over this. Listen, Laurent. I have too many things with which to reproach you."

"What have you got to reproach me with?"

"No. Nothing...You could not have saved me against myself. You took advantage of my weakness. You pleased yourself in ruining my life...I forgive you for all that. But, for Heaven's sake, do not accuse me of having killed Camille. Keep your crime with yourself. Do not try to frighten me still more."

Laurent raised his hand to strike Therese across her face.

"Strike me. I shall like that better," she added, "I shall then suffer less."

And she held out her face. He checked himself. He took a chair and seated himself by the young woman's side.

"Listen," he said to her in a voice to soften which he had to make an effort, "you are showing cowardice in refusing to admit your

own part in the crime. You know it perfectly well that we did it together. You also know that you are as guilty as I am. Why do you want to make my guilt heavier by declaring yourself to be innocent? If you had been innocent, you would not have agreed to marry me. Do you remember the two years that followed the murder? Do you desire a trial? I am going to tell the whole thing to the Authorities. You will see whether we shall not be condemned together."

At this, they both felt a shiver pass through their body. Therese replied.

"The Authorities may condemn me, but Camille knows the fact. He does not torment me at night as he torments you."

"Camille leaves me unmolested," said Laurent, "it is you who see him pass during your nightmares. I have heard you crying."

"Don't say that," cried the young woman in anger, "I have never cried. I do not wish that the ghost should come. Oh, I know. You want to turn him away from you. I am innocent! I am innocent!"

Terrified, they looked at each other. They were tired, but afraid of reviving the ghost of the drowned. Their quarrels always ended thus. They protested that they were innocent. They tried to deceive their own selves in order to drive away unpleasant dreams. They tried to defend themselves as if they were actually on their trial before a tribunal. The strangest thing was that they themselves were never duped by their own arguments. Both of them remembered

perfectly all the circumstances attending the assassination. They read the truth in each other's eyes, while their lips uttered the falsehoods. Their lies were childish lies. Their affirmations were ridiculous. They lied for the sake of lying, without being able to hide from themselves that they lied. They adopted the role of the accuser by turns. But as the process they adopted never produced any results, they began every evening with a cruel animosity. They knew that they could prove nothing; that they could not efface the past. Yet they always returned to the charge. It was only when they had raised a great storm of words and a crisis was imminent that they drew away from their quarrel.

All this time the paralytic kept her eyes fixed on them. An ardent joy filled those eyes whenever Laurent raised his big arms over Therese's head in a threatening attitude.

XXIX

A fresh development took place. Driven by the fear to the end of her tether, and not knowing where to get a consoling thought, Therese gave herself up to crying loudly for the drowned husband before Laurent.

She felt suddenly depressed. Her greatly strained nerves broke down. Her dry and cruel nature softened itself a little. She had already experienced some relaxation during the first few days of her marriage. This relaxation returned to her, as if to mark the necessary reaction in her nature. When the young woman had fought with all her nerves against Camille's ghost, when she had lived for several months a life of great irritation, revolt against her sufferings, anxious to struggle against them with all her will power, she found suddenly assailed by a feeling of lassitude. She was vanquished.

Becoming a woman again, even a little girl, losing all her force to stiffen, unable to stand boldly before her fears, she became an object of pity. She broke down into tears. She was repentant, hoping to find some relief in this way. She wished to make the best of her *faibless* and the spirit in which she found herself. Perhaps the drowned man, who never yielded to her irritation, may yield to her tears. Her repentance was therefore a calculated one. She told herself that it was certainly the best means of pacifying and pleasing Camille. Like those devotees who think of deceiving God and gaining His pardon by praying from the lips and

posing as humble penitents, Therese humbled herself, beat her breast; and uttered words of repentance without feeling, in the heart of her hearts, anything but fear and cowardice. Besides, she experienced a sort of physical pleasure in abandoning herself, in feeling effeminate and crushed, and in subjecting herself to pain without resistance.

She overwhelmed Madam Raquin with her whimperings. The paralytic was now of some practical use for her. She now became a sort of an idol before whom Therese offered her prayers everyday. She was like a piece of furniture before which she could confess all her faults without fear of any sort and ask for pardon. Since the time she felt the need of crying, of relieving herself by sobbing, she began to kneel down before the invalid and cried before her. She sobbed, she choked, and she enacted a scene of remorsefulness before her alone that comforted her and quietened her.

"I am miserable," she muttered, "I do not deserve any mercy. I have deceived you. I sent your son to his death. You will never forgive me. And yet, if you could read into my heart the remorse that is tearing me, if you could know how much I am suffering, perhaps you will have pity on me. No, not pity for me. I should like to die thus at your feet, crushed by shame and pain."

She talked like this for hours together, passing from despair to hope, or condemning herself and then forgiving. She imitated the voice of a little girl that was ill; sometimes brave, sometimes plaintive. She stretched herself on

the floor and then sat up again, obeying every thought that crossed her mind ; now of humility or pride, of repentance and then revolt. Sometimes she forgot that she was kneeling before Madam Raquin and continued her monologue as if in a dream.

When she got tired ; she arose staggering, dreaming, and descended to the shop. She calmed herself now so that she may not appear agitated before her customers. When her remorse pressed her again, she ascended the staircase once more and kneeled down before the invalid as before. And the scene was repeated at least ten times during the day.

Therese never imagined for a moment that her tears and her expressions of repentance caused an unspeakable pain to her aunt. The truth was that a worse form of torture could not be devised for Madam Raquin than this comedy played by her niece. The paralytic saw clearly the selfishness hidden behind those effusions of pain. She suffered horribly from those long monologues to which she was forced to submit and which reminded her always of the assassination of her son, Camille. She could not forgive. On the contrary, she was surrounded by thoughts of vengeance which she was powerless to wreak. She must hear all day the prayer for forgiveness. She wanted to reply. Certain words of her niece prompted her to utter an angry denial. But she must remain speechless, letting Therese to plead her cause without the least interruption. Her inability to reply, or to close her ears, filled her with an inexpressible torment. One by one the words of the

young woman sank deep into Madam Raquin's soul, like an irritating song. She believed that the murderers had planned that cruel and diabolical method of torturing her. Her only defence against it was to shut her eyes. As soon as her niece fell on.....her knees, she closed her eyes. She had to listen, but not to see her.

Therese now became so bold as to embarrass her aunt. One day, during a scene of repentance, she pretended to have noticed some tenderness for her in the eyes of Madam Raquin. She stood up and cried out in a bewildered tone, "You forgive me! You forgive me!" Then, she kissed the forehead and the cheeks of the poor woman who could not withdraw her head away. The cold and lifeless flesh which Therese touched with her lips caused her a violent disgust. She thought that that disgust, like the tears, was an excellent method of soothing her nerves. From that day on, she always kissed the invalid, in order to express her penitence and to sooth her nerves.

"Oh! How good you are!" she declared often, "I can see that my tears have touched you. Your looks are full of pity. I am saved!"

Then she troubled the paralytic with her kisses. She placed her head at her feet. She kissed her hands. She smiled to her to express her happiness. She cared for her with all her attention.

At the end of some time, she believed that she had received the pardon of Madam Raquin. She required only her good wishes and her blessings now.

That was too much for the paralytic. She was on the point of dying. Under the kisses of her niece, she experienced once again that sensation of repugnance and rage which filled her every morning and evening, when Laurent took her in his arms to lift her out of, or put her into the bed. She was obliged to submit to the intolerable kisses of the traitress who had murdered her son. She could not even wipe out with her hands the kisses that the young woman had inflicted on her cheeks. For hours, she felt these kisses scorching her. She was thus made a doll in the hands of the murderers of Camille, a doll which they dressed, which they turned to right or left, according as it suited their needs or whims. She lay inert in their hands, as if she had no life; and yet she lived, revolting and torn, at the very touch of Therese or Laurent. What exasperated her specially was the atrocious mockery of the young woman who pretended to read kind thoughts in her eyes, while actually she wished to destroy the criminals. Often she tried to curse the woman loudly, and tried to put all the hate in her eyes. But Therese, who was thankfully repeating twenty times a day that she was forgiven, redoubled her kisses. She did not desire to know anything further. The paralytic must accept the thanks which her heart detested. She now lived a life full of irritation, bitterness and helplessness.

If Laurent was there and he saw his wife kneeling before Madam Raquin, he at once pulled her up with some brutality:

"No more comedy!" he said, "do I weep? Do I prostrate myself? You are doing all this in order to harass me!"

Therese's remorse agitated him strongly. It caused him much suffering to see his accomplice moving about with tears in her eyes and supplications on her lips. The sight of that living remorse redoubled his tears, increased his trouble. It was like an eternal reproach moving about in the house. Then, he feared that repentance might lead his wife one day to reveal everything. He should have preferred her to be stiff and defiant, violently denying the charge he levelled against her. But she had changed her attitude. Now she admitted voluntarily the part she had taken in the crime. She accused herself. She was now afraid and talked of redemption. That attitude irritated Laurent. Every evening their quarrels became more painful and threatening.

"Listen !" Therese said to her husband, "we are the greatest criminals. We must repent, if we want to have some tranquillity. See ! I am more calm now, since I began to weep. You should imitate me. Let us confess that we are justly punished for having committed a horrible crime."

"Bah !" replied Laurent brusquely, "you may say anything you like. I know that you are the greatest hypocrite. Weep, if that gives you relief. But I pray you not to harass me with your tears."

"Ah ! You are wicked ! You refuse to repent. You are a coward, for you killed Camille treacherously."

"Do you mean to tell me that I alone am the culprit ?"

"No, I do not say that. I am a culprit, a greater culprit than you are. I should have protected my husband from you. Oh! I realise the horror of my fault, but I am trying to receive pardon for it, and I shall succeed in that. But you, Laurent; you will continue to have a desolate life. You do not have even the decency to save my aunt from your shameful outbursts of anger. You have never addressed to her even a word of regret!"

And she kissed Madam Raquin who closed her eyes. She hovered round her, adjusted her pillows so that her head would be raised, and wasted on her a lot of kindness. Laurent felt exasperated.

"Oh! Leave that!" he shouted, "you do not see that your sight and your attentions are odious to her. If she could raise her hand, she would have choked you."

The slow and plaintive words of his wife, and her attitudes of resignation gradually blinded him with rage. He saw clearly that all that was part of her tactics. She did not wish to make a common cause with him. Sometimes, he thought that she was on the right path, that her tears will fight against her fears of Camille's ghost. The thought of being alone in his suffering froze him with fear. He also wished to repent, to play the farce of remorse. But he failed to have the necessary sobs and words. Then, he flew into a rage. He shook Therese roughly for having irritated him. The young woman did not resist him. She broke down into tears and showed herself to be more repentant. This made Laurent still more angry. His

irritation reached its peak when Therese began to sing the praises of Camille for his virtues.

"He was a good man," she said, "we are guilty of the greatest cruelty in having attacked that excellent soul who never harboured a single evil thought."

"He was good. Yes, I know it," sneered Laurent, "but you mean to say that he was a beast. Is it not? You have perhaps forgot. You pretended that even a single word from him annoyed you, that he could not open his mouth without uttering something foolish."

"This is no time to mock. The only thing you lack is to heap insults on the man you assassinated. You know nothing about a woman's heart, Laurent. Camille loved me, and I loved him."

"You loved him! Oh, certainly! That is a discovery. Doubtless, this is so, for you took me as your lover while you loved your husband! I remember a day when you lay on my chest and said that Camille disgusted you, for when you tried to poke his body with your fingers you felt as if you were poking a piece of clay. Oh, I know how much you loved me! You needed more vigorous arms than those of that poor creature."

"I loved him as a sister. He was the son of my benefactress. He had a delicate nature. He was noble and generous to me, helpful and loving. And we killed him! My God. Oh, my God!"

She cried and swooned. Madam Raquin threw at her a pointed regard, angry to hear

such praise of her son from such a mouth. Laurent, helpless against those tears, began to walk feverishly, trying to find out some method of choking off Therese's remorse. All this praise that he heard about his victim caused him a considerable anxiety. He really came to believe in the good qualities of Camille. This increased his fears. But what made him beside himself with rage was the comparison that Therese made between her first and her second husband, to the advantage of the first one.

"Oh, yes. He was better than you are. I wish he had been alive, and you had been in his place, in the grave."

Laurent shrugged his shoulders at first.

"You are right," Therese continued, "I did not perhaps love him so well when he was alive. But now I miss him, I love him. I love him and I hate you. Do you see? You, you are an assassin!"

"Shut up!" Laurent burst out.

"He was a victim. An honest man whom a scoundrel has killed. Oh, you cannot frighten me. You know very well that you are a miserable brute, without heart, without soul. How can you expect that I should love you, now that you are covered with Camille's blood? Camille had all the tenderness for me, and I shall kill you. Do you hear? If that could bring back Camille to life and give me back his love!"

"Keep quiet. You miserable beast!"

"Why should I keep quiet? I am telling the truth. I shall buy forgiveness at the cost of

your blood. Oh, how I am suffering! It was my fault that this scoundrel murdered my husband. I must go one night and kiss the ground where he rests. It will be my last homage."

Laurent was mad with fury at the atrocious picture Therese had drawn before his eyes. He attacked her, threw her on the floor and sat on her with his fists raised.

"That is all right," she cried, "strike me. Kill me. Camille had never raised his hand against me. But you, you are a monster."

Laurent, lashed by these words, shook her with rage, beat her and wanted to murder her. But on second thoughts, he desisted. Therese weakened under the blows and lay quiet. Sometimes, she provoked her husband to strike her again. For the physical blows she received gave her relief from her nervous suffering. She always slept better during the night after these blows. Madam Raquin also enjoyed the scene when Laurent threw Therese down to the floor and kicked her.

The life of the assassin was unenviable, since the day Therese began to mourn the death of Camille so loudly. From that day, the miserable man lived eternally with his victim. At all hours, he used to hear his wife singing the praises, and regretting the absence of her first husband. She started doing it at the slightest pretext. Camille did this, Camille did that; Camille had such and such a quality; Camille loved in such and such a manner. Camille always! Therese used all her cunning to make for Laurent more

ard more cruel that torture which she had devised for her own relief. Laurent could not touch a thing in the house without being reminded by Therese that Camille had used it before. Ceaselessly, he was brought before the man he had killed. He was almost driven out of his senses. He insisted on his wife keeping quiet. But their quarrels always ended in blows.

XXX

A time came when Madam Raquin, in order to escape the suffering that she had to endure, decided to starve herself to death. She had reached the end of her forbearance, she could not bear any longer the continued presence of the murderers of her son. She hoped to find relief only in death. As she was unable to avenge the murder of her son, she preferred to die rather than live that life of continual torture.

For two days, she refused all food. She would shut her teeth with all the force left to her and would not let them introduce any food into her mouth. Therese was desperate. She asked herself, "At whose feet shall I express my repentance, if she dies?" She gave interminable lectures to her, proving that she should live. She wept, she was angry. She tried to open the mouth of the paralytic as they open the mouth of some animal that resists. But Madam Raquin did not yield. It was a loathsome struggle.

Laurent kept neutral. He was indifferent. He was surprised to see Therese preventing the suicide of the paralytic. Now that the presence of the old woman was unnecessary, he wished her to die. He would not kill her himself, but if she desired to die he saw no necessity of refusing her the means for it.

"Well! Leave her," he told her wife, "it will be a good riddance. When she is no more there, we may be happier."

These words, repeated several times before her, produced a strange emotion in Madam Raquin. She feared that the hopes of Laurent might be fulfilled. She did not desire that they should be happy after her death. She decided that it was a cowardice on her part to invite death in that fashion. She had no right to die before assisting in the exposure of the crime. She became averse to the idea of committing suicide, for she wanted to go to her grave with the knowledge that Camille had been avenged. She therefore took the nourishments that her niece offered her. She consented to live again.

Besides, she knew that the unravelling of the crime was not far. Each day the relations between the couple became more strained, and unbearable. A crisis was imminent. Therese and Laurent were more threatening to each other. They passed all their time in anxiety now. They were living in an eternal hell, making all they did or said full of bitterness and cruelty, wishing to push the other into an abyss that seemed to open out at their feet.

The thought of living separately came to both of them. Each thought of getting some repose by living away from the other, far from the passage of the Pont-Neuf. But they had not the courage to do it. They could not save themselves. A sort of repulsion and at the same time a sort of attraction marked their life. Then, there were material difficulties which checked their flight. They did not know what to do with the invalid, nor how to dispose of the guests of the Thursday evenings. If they fled, perhaps people would-suspect something. They imagined that they would be pursued and caught, and then

they would be guillotined. They stayed behind because of their cowardice. They carried on their existence of horror.

During the day, when Laurent was not there, Therese went down to the shop, troubled and uneasy, not knowing how to fill the void that she felt growing within her. As soon as she was alone in the shop, an uneasiness possessed her. She looked blankly at the passers-by in that filthy and dark gallery. She was afraid of dying in that dark hole. Finally, she requested Suzanne to come and pass the day-time with her, hoping that her presence may calm her.

Suzanne was glad to accept the invitation. She had always felt a liking for Therese. She brought her knitting and took Madam Raquin's place behind the counter.

Therese now gave some respite to her aunt. She did not go up to her so frequently now. She had another occupation. She listened to Suzanne who talked about her own affairs, her own monotonous life. This conversation made Therese forget herself for some time.

By and by, the shop lost all its customers. Since the time Madam Raquin had been confined to the rooms above, the shop had been neglected, and dust was allowed to settle down on goods which were now spoilt. The shop had not been cleaned for some time. But what really drove away the customers was the strange way in which Therese received them. The poor people living in that locality, who were the customers of the shop, were used to the kind and sweet behaviour of Madam Raquin. They did

not like the rudeness of Therese. Since Therese took Suzanne into the shop, the defection of the customers was complete. The two young women remained talking and did not attend to the customers promptly. The shop now earned not even a single sou for meeting the expenses of the household. It was necessary to draw upon the capital of forty thousand and some odd francs.

Therese now went out frequently during the afternoons. Nobody knew where she went. She left Suzanne to look after the shop.

Five months after their marriage, Therese had a terrible shock. She realised that she was carrying a baby. The thought of having Laurent's baby appeared to her to be monstrous. She wished to get rid of her conception at any cost. She said nothing to her husband. One day while they were having their quarrel, and while Laurent was about to kick her, she put forward her abdomen. The following day, she had an abortion.

On his part, Laurent was also leading a miserable life. He felt the days to be unbearably long. Each day brought to him the same anguish, the same boredom, with regularity. He did no work. Inactivity bored him to death. He went to his studio by habit. He lay down on the *divan* there and became a prey to his melancholy thoughts. He did no more painting, as his fingers always painted Camille's face. He had thrown away the colour box in one corner. He imposed on himself an absolute laziness.

He questioned himself often as to what he should do. He loitered about for an hour on the footpath of the rue Mazarine, hesitating on the kind of distraction he should seek. He decided to go to the rue Guenegaud and then to stroll about on the river bank. Until the evening he was there watching the Seine. This was his usual programme for all days. He spent his mornings in his studio on the *divan* and his afternoons on the streets and on the river-bank. This lasted for months and could have gone on for years.

Often Laurent thought that he had killed Camille so that he should have to do no work. But he was surprised that now that he had to do nothing, he was forced to endure such a suffering. He should have wished to be happy. He proved to himself that he was wrong to suffer. He said to himself that he should enjoy the supreme happiness by just crossing his arms on the breast. But all his reasoning failed before the hard facts. In the heart of his hearts he was compelled to admit that his idleness made his suffering more cruel by leaving him free to brood over his troubles at all hours. Idleness, that existence of the brute that he had dreamt about, was his curse. For a few moments, he ardently desired to have some work which will draw him away from his sad thoughts. Then he let himself go again, and fall under the burden of his fate which was about to crush him.

To tell the truth, he experienced no relief from his suffering, except when he belaboured *Therese*.

His greatest suffering was when he was reminded of the scar that Camille had caused on his neck. At times, he imagined that his whole body was covered with such scars. If he forgot the past momentarily, the pink colour of the scar reminded him of the murder. He could not face the mirror without this bitter memory. He came to believe that the teeth of the drowned man had put into that scar some beast that was devouring him. He carried with him thus, wherever he went, a living souvenir of his crime. In their quarrels, Therese often tried to pierce her finger nails into it and caused him much pain. It was the means for her vengeance on him. Several times he was tempted to cut it out from his neck, in order to destroy the marks of Camille's teeth. But the cold steel of the razor always revived him to his senses.

He had a special hatred for the cat, Francois, since it came to take refuge at the feet of the paralytic. If Laurent did not kill it yet, it was only because he dared not approach it. The cat looked at him with fixed, diabolical eyes. These eyes always exasperated him. He had a dread of those eyes, and imagined many absurd things about them. Laurent was literally afraid of the cat. He said to himself that the cat as well as Madam Raquin knew about his crime and would denounce him, if only they could speak.

Finally, one evening, he decided to dispose of the cat. He opened wide the window of the Dining room and approached to take hold of it by the neck. Madam Raquin understood. Two big tears appeared on her two cheeks. The cat tried to scratch Laurent. But he held it tighly and then threw it with all his force against the

black wall opposite. The cat struck against it and broke its back. It then fell down on the roof of the show-window in the passage below. Throughout the night, the unfortunate beast gave out such heart-rending moans! That night Madam Raquin wept for Francois as she had wept for Camille.

Soon, Laurent had fresh uneasiness. He felt alarmed at the change he had noticed in his wife's attitude.

Therese had become more sombre, and moody. She had given up her effusions of repentance before Madam Raquin. Her kisses had ceased. She resumed her cold and cruel attitude towards the old woman. One could say that she had tried repentance to give her relief, but not being successful, she had given it up for something else. Her sadness was certainly due to her failure to get peace.

This change surprised and frightened Laurent. For Therese went out of the house oftener. This caused him greater anxiety than the wordy despair that she had expressed before. Now, she said nothing. She did not quarrel. She became quite reserved. He feared that she might approach a priest or a judge one day to make a clean breast of it.

Her excursions out of the house caused him great anxiety. He thought that she was looking for some one in whom she could confide, that she was planning treachery. Twice he tried to follow her, but each time he lost sight of her in the streets. He was almost certain that Therese was going to denounce him. He decided to check her in her attempt.

XXXI

One morning, Laurent, instead of going to his studio, entered into the shop of a wine merchant at the corner of the rue Guenegaud, opposite the passage. From there he watched everybody who came out of the passage. He was on the look out for Therese. In the evening, the young woman had mentioned that she would go out early in the morning and would not return until late at night.

Laurent waited for about half an hour. He knew that his wife was in the habit of leaving by the rue Mazarine. For an instant, he was hesitating that she may leave by the rue de Seine. He wanted to go back to the gallery and hide himself somewhere there, even in the house. Just when he was becoming impatient, he saw Therese leaving the passage hurriedly. She was dressed in clean stuff for the first time in many years. He noticed that she was dressed like girl. She walked on the foot-path in a provoking manner, staring at the men. She took to the rue Mazarine. Laurent followed her.

The weather was clear, and the young woman was walking slowly, with her head inclined slightly to one side, and her hair falling on her back. The men who noticed her from the front, turned back to observe her from behind also. She followed the rue de Ecole-de-Medecine. Laurent was terrified. He knew that the Police Office was there. He was now sure that his wife was going to squeal. He decided that he

would intervene the moment she crossed the door to the Police Station. He would supplicate, he would beat her, but he would force her to be quiet. At the corner of a street, she saw a Police Sargent passing. He shuddered to see her approaching him. He hid himself behind a doorway. He was afraid that he would be arrested on the spot, if he showed himself. This course was a veritable agony for him. While his wife walked in the sun nonchalantly and impudently, he followed her nervously, saying to himself that everything was lost, that he could not now save himself, that they would guillotine him. Every step that he took forward seemed to him to be a step forward to the final reckoning.

Suddenly, emerging on the old Place Saint-Michel, Therese entered a cafe at the corner of the rue Monsieur-le-Prince. She took a seat among a group of women and students. She shook hands all round. Then she ordered a glass of absinthe.

She appeared to be quite at her ease. She was talking to a blond young man who had apparently waited for her for some time. Two other girls joined them in their conversation. The women smoked and the men embraced them in full view of the public. When Therese had finished her absinthe, she got up and took the arm of the young man. They went towards the rue de Harpe. Laurent followed them for some distance, until they entered a furnished house. He remained standing in the middle of the road, watching the house. After some moments, he noticed the form of Therese at a window which she closed. He also distinguished the arms of the young man gliding on her figure.

Laurent understood everything. Without waiting any longer, he walked away peacefully, reassured and happy.

"Bah." He said to himself while going towards the river. "That is better. She has something to occupy her in this. She will no more think of mischief. She is devilish finer than I am!"

What surprised him most was that he himself did not think of diverting himself in vice. He could find a remedy in it against his terrors. He never thought of it, because his desires were killed. He did not feel the least desire for debauchery. The faithlessness of his wife left him cold. It aroused no revolt in him to see his wife falling into the arms of another man. On the contrary, it pleased him. Therese had now become a stranger to him. He could have sold her hundred times to purchase for himself a single hour of mental peace.

He began to walk about, feeling happy at the sudden change from danger to security. He felt almost thankful to his wife for going to her lover rather than to the Police. That change made it clear to him that he was wrong to tremble where there was no danger. It also made him think whether vice would not give him relief.

That evening, on return to the shop, Laurent decided that he would demand a few thousand francs from his wife, and would use all means to obtain them. He knew that for a man vice costs a good deal of money. He waited patiently for Therese who had not yet returned home. When she came back, he talked to her sweetly. He did not let her know that he had spied on her.

that morning. She was somewhat tipsy, and discarded her dress which was smelling of tobacco and liqueur. Tired, with her marble-like face, she complained loudly of the fatigue of the day.

The dinner was finished in silence. Therese did not eat anything. During the dessert, Laurent placed his elbows on the table and ingratiatingly demanded from her five thousand francs.

"No." She replied drily. "If I give you a free hand, you will send us to the gutter. Are you ignorant of our position? We are heading straight for bankruptcy."

"That is possible." He replied coolly. "It is all the same to me. I want the money."

"No. A thousand times no. You gave up your post. The business of the shop is ruined, and we cannot live on the interest of my dowry. Each day, I have to draw upon the capital to feed you, and to provide rent for your studio. You are not going to have anything more. Do you hear me? It is useless."

"Reflect. Do not refuse me thus. I have told you that I need five thousand francs, and I am going to have it from you."

That cool persistence irritated Therese.

"Oh! I see." She cried out. "You are going to end as you started! It is four years now that we have been supporting you. You came to ~~us~~ only for eating and drinking. Ever since that time, you have been a burden to us. You do not

earn anything, but you wish to fix your own fashion of living, all at my expense. No. You shall have nothing, not even a *sou*. Do you wish me to tell you what you are? Well, you are a..."

She said the word. But Laurent burst out laughing. He contented himself with the reply :

"You are learning nice words from people with whom you live now."

It was the only allusion that he permitted himself to make about Therese's love affairs. She lifted her head proudly, and said in a bitter tone :

"In any case, I do not live with assassins."

Laurent turned very pale. He controlled himself for a moment, and then replied in a trembling voice :

"Listen, my girl." He said, "Let us not quarrel. That will be of no avail ; neither for you, nor for me. I am at the end of my tether. It will be prudent for us to understand each other, unless we want that misfortune should overtake us. I have asked you for five thousand francs, because I need them. I might as well tell you that I intend to use them for assuring our tranquillity."

He had a strange smile, and continued, "Consider it, and give me your final answer."

"I have considered everything," replied the young woman, "I have told you. You shall not get even a *sou*."

Her husband rose violently. She feared that she would be beaten. But she decided that she would not yield. However, Laurent did not approach her. He declared coolly that he was tired of his life and was going to the Police to relate the whole story of the murder.

"You are forcing me to this course." He said, "You are making my existence unbearable. I prefer to end it. We shall be tried and condemned, both of us. That is all."

"Do you wish to frighten me?" asked his wife. "I am as much tired of life as you are. It is I who is going to the Police, if you don't. Well, I am prepared to follow you to the scaffold. I am not a coward like you. Come, let us go to the Police together."

She rose and proceeded towards the staircase.

"That will be so," muttered her husband, "let us go there together."

When they had reached the shop, they regarded each other frightened and uneasy. It appeared to them that they had just been nailed to the ground. The few minutes that they took in crossing to the shop were enough to show them the consequences that will result from their mad behaviour. Each saw simultaneously the policemen, the prison, the court of assizes, the guillotine. Each realised the inner weakness. They were tempted to fall at the other's knees appealing to stop, not to disclose anything. Their fear, their embarrassment, kept them motionless and speechless for two or three minutes. It was Therese who was the first to speak and to yield.

"After all," she said, "I am a great fool to refuse you the money. You will always be a charge to me for your upkeep. Why should I not give you that amount at once?"

She did not disguise the fact of her defeat. She sat down behind the counter and wrote out a cheque for five thousand francs. There was no further question of the Police that evening.

As soon as Laurent had the money in his pockets, he began to enjoy himself. He visited the girls, and lived a life of debauchery. He slept during the day and ran about during the night. He ran after excitement, trying to escape the real trouble. But he did not succeed. It only weakened his body further. He found in dissipation nothing but sadness. He decided finally not to go out any more.

Therese, on her part, also lived like Laurent. For about a month she lived in the cafes. She returned home for a few minutes in the evenings to feed Madam Raquin and to put her to bed, and then again went out for the whole night. Once, the husband and the wife did not see each other for four days. Finally, she was disgusted. She decided that vice, like her supplications before Madam Raquin, had failed to give her any relief from her malady. In vain had she frequented all the furnished hotels of Latin Quarter, in vain had she led a life of shame. Her nerves were at the breaking point. The debauchery, or the physical pleasures did not protect her against her troubles. She decided to stay at home.

Having exhausted all the means to save themselves, the two murderers were compelled to

be together once again. They found that they had no force left to continue their quarrels. They were delivered entirely to their anguish. Once again they were compelled to live in the damp and dark house in the passage.

But after some time, the quarrels of the evening started again. Now, the blows and the cries lasted for the whole day. To their hatred for each other was now added the suspicion, and the suspicion made them mad.

They feared each other. The scene that had followed the demand for the five thousand francs now repeated itself, morning and evening. In their anger, they cried out that they would reveal everything. Then, they promised each other, with tears in their eyes, that they would keep silent. They threatened each other with the confession of the crime only to terrify each other. None of them had the courage and the strength to speak out and look for relief from their sufferings in the punishment.

After about twenty attempts, they went up to the gate of the Police Station, one following the other. Now it was Laurent who wished to confess, at another time, it was Therese who wished to do it. But they both came back and decided to wait a little longer, after having exchanged insults and ardent entreaties.

Every fresh crisis left them more suspicious and more ferocious.

From morning till evening, they spied on each other. They did not leave the house singly. Their suspicions made them to live closer to each other than they had done ever before. If Therese went to the shop, Laurent accompanied

her, for fear that she may not tell about their crime to the customer. If Laurent stood at the door and watched the passers-by, Therese was by his side to see that he did not talk to anybody.

Such a state of war between them could not last for long.

Both Therese and Laurent secretly desired to escape from their suffering by committing another crime. It was absolutely necessary that one of them should be removed to enable the other to get some repose. This idea struck each of them at the same moment. Both of them felt the pressing necessity of separation, an eternal separation. The murder, which appeared to each of them as the only solution, was to them quite natural; fated for them. Camille's murder presented this idea to them forcefully. They did not even discuss the consequences of their project. They accepted it as the only means of their salvation. Laurent decided that he would murder Therese, for she was the source of all his troubles. On her part, Therese also decided that she would kill Laurent, for the same reasons.

Their resolution to murder calmed them a little. They made their plans.

Laurent had met an old friend of his who was an assistant in a Chemist's shop. He began to visit him sometimes to be able to get some poison. Finally, he succeeded in stealing a little bottle of prussic acid which leaves no trace when administered in a drink. During Laurent's absence from the house, Therese had a kitchen knife specially sharpened. She hid the knife in a corner in the buffet.

XXXII

The following Thursday evening was a particularly gay evening for everybody when the guests arrived. Therese detained the guests until half past eleven. When leaving, Grivet observed that he had never spent such an agreeable time before.

That evening the play was dispensed with in favour of conversation. Suzanne, who was pregnant, talked all the time to Therese about the sufferings and joys of a mother. Therese appeared to listen with deep interest. Laurent, on his side, seemed to be interested in the recitals of Michaud.

"During all these years that the guests had frequented Madam Raquin's house they did not even suspect the reality. Not even for a moment did they imagine the terrible drama that was being enacted in that house. Like a police officer, Olivier had often remarked that the Dining room smelt of honest people. Grivet, not to be behind, had compared that house with the Temple of Peace. They were convinced that the household of their hosts was a model household, full of love and peace.

The paralytic had no longer attempted to reveal the infamies which were hidden behind the apparent tranquillity of Thursday evenings. Seeing the tortures that the murderers inflicted on each other, she knew that the crisis ~~would~~ come one day. She waited for the events to take their own course. She knew that the consequences of Camille's murder would kill the assassins

in their turn. Her only prayer to the Heavens was that her life may be spared long enough to see that end. Her last wish was that her eyes may feast upon the spectacle of the greatest suffering that would destroy Therese and Laurent.

That evening, Grivet took his seat by her side and talked with her for a long time, answering, as usual, his own questions. But he could not draw even a look from her.

"It is so peaceful in your house that one never likes to leave it." He declared.

"The fact is" supported Michaud, "that I have never gone to sleep here; I, who is in the habit of going to bed at nine o'clock."

"Do you see her white teeth?" Put in Olivier, "They show the presence of honest people in this house. That is the reason why everybody is happy in this household."

Grivet, annoyed at being surpassed, said with an emphatic gesture, "This house is the Temple of Peace."

In the meantime, Suzanne was telling Therese, "I shall be here tomorrow at nine."

"No." Therese hastened to reply. "Don't come before the afternoon. I shall be out during the morning."

Her voice was strange and troubled. She accompanied the guests upto the passage. Laurent also came down with a lantern. When they were alone, the couple gave out a sigh of relief. They had been full of anxiety throughout the whole evening.

Before putting Madam Raquin to bed, they were in the habit of arranging everything in order in the Dining room, prepare the water for the night, and hover round the paralytic until everything was done.

"Well, are we not going to bed?" Laurent demanded, who seemed to come out of a dream.

"Yes. Yes.. We shall go to bed," replied Therese, shivering as if she had a great fright.

She got up and took the water jug.

"Leave it." Laurent cried out, making his voice as natural as possible. "I shall prepare the water for the night. You should occupy yourself with your aunt."

He snatched the jug from his wife's hands and filled it with water. Then, avoiding the eyes of Therese, he emptied the tiny bottle of prussic acid into it. During this interval, Therese was bending over the buffet. She took out the knife and hid it in her dress.

At that moment, that strange sensation which precedes a danger, made Laurent turn his head instinctively. Husband and wife regarded each other. Therese saw the poison bottle in Laurent's hands and Laurent saw the shining edge of the knife inside the folds of Therese's dress. They looked at each other for some seconds, mute and cold. They understood. Each was frozen at discovering the plans of the other.

Madam Raquin sensed the change. She knew that the end was approaching. She regarded them with fixed eyes.

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‘Suddenly, Therese and Laurent broke out into sobs. They fell into each other’s arms, sobbing like children. They thought of the miserable life that they had led, and which they would still lead if they were coward enough to live. They felt the great need for repose. They exchanged the last look, a look of thankfulness in the face of the knife and the poison bottle. Therese took the jug of water, and drank half of it. She then extended it to Laurent who finished the rest. That was the finish. They fell down, one upon the other, finding consolation at last in death.

The bodies remained all the night on the floor of the Dining room, lighted by the pale light of the lamp. And for about twelve hours, until noon the next day, Madam Raquin, silent and stiff, contemplated them at her feet.

